■ Sports
Pacquiao bares weapon ahead of the fight

■ News/ A2
Drilon, Villar in showdown for Senate presidency

■ Science
Hair loss not just men's concern

■ Across / A17
Bayan Muna campaign ends in 2 deaths

■ Super
Invasion of the B-listers

Roco 'miting' in Naga; FPJ in Makati; none for GMA

By Michael Lim Ubac
and Christine Avendaño

NAGA CITY—He was still way up in the air on a private plane hovering over the airport but already thousands of Bicolanos were cheering their favorite son.

Sunday is the survey ratings but no...

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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Religious blocs more potent now than Catholic Church

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

CHARISMATIC religious groups could play a pivotal role for the first time in the coming elections as they may deliver the deciding votes for President Macapagal-Arroyo, according to San Mateo Center, an American think tank.

Danding loses SMC case

Bishops bare 'forced absentee voting' in AFP

By Blanche S. Rivera
and Marvin P. Marfil

AT LEAST 2,50,000 people are being mobilized under "Operation Tuwid" to fight what military officers called a detailed plan for "systematic, massive and nationwide" electoral fraud, leaders of the Catholic Church said yesterday.

Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales, Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal and Davao Archbishop Fernando Capalla, who are leading the multisectoral coalition for honest and peaceful elections (LENTE), said they were "bugging" all those connected to determine the alleged plan and heed their consciences for the sake of the nation.

Two groups of military officers are said to have met with the three archbishops and officers of the coalition for NGOs to seek the Church's help in derailing the electoral fraud that the Armed Forces has allegedly been ordered to facilitate.

Quoting the military officers, the coalition said AFP personnel had been made to vote in the...

SHOW OF HOPE: Archbishop of Manila Gaudencio Rosales (left) and Cardinal Vidal meet the press to launch "Operation Tuwid" which will closely monitor poll fraud such as the alleged irregular voting in the AFP

SHOW OF FORCE: Soldiers at Camp Aguinaldo prepare for deployment on Election Day for possible terror attacks, according to government officials

Sandigan rules coconut farmers own 27% of firm

By Antonio Nucum
and Dona Pazolagan

THE SANDIGANBAYAN on appeals court yesterday awarded to the government a 27 percent bloc of shares in San Miguel Corp., the country's largest company, that coconut farmers claim as their own because it was bought using funds from the levy collected from them during the Marcos dictatorship.

The decision, released just four days before the national elections on Monday, was a partial reversal in judgment of the 17-year litigation over the ownership of the seven levy funds and did not vote on a separate 20 percent bloc of SMC shares held by chair Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco.

The Presidential Commission on Good Government, sequestered the 47 percent bloc of SMC shares after the Edsa people power revolution of 1986 which toppled the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, claiming they were part of the ill-gotten wealth of Marcos and his cronies.

It publishes PCGG chair Haydee Yorac said it was only a matter of time before the government takes back the entire 47 percent coconut SMC shares from Cojuangco.

"It's good news to the people. It's good news to the coconut farmers," said Yorac.

"The coco levy funds are not...thereby public funds and therefore all shares and properties acquired through it must be returned to government," she said.

Although the ruling would still be appealed before the Supreme Court, she said she had no doubt at all that the government "will get back everything".

She said she had not tested how long the decision would take "for as long as there is reasonable probability that it will be decided soon, instead of the farmers just sweating and waiting."

Yorac said she did not believe the unfavorable ruling against...

SANDIGAN, A-10

Gloria not impressed by Bro. Eddie's big crowd

By Juliet Labog-Javellana
and Christine O. Avendaño

Has Gringo dumped FPJ? Sample ballots show Guardians back GMA

By Carlito Pablo

SPECULATION has grown that Sen. Gregorio Honasan has dumped Senator Fernando Poe Jr. after sample ballots released by the Honasan faction of a right-wing fraternal organization were shown to endorse President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The sample ballot reportedly released in the past two days by the Philippine Guardians Brotherhood Inc. endorsed Ms Macapagal and her running mate Senator Noli de Castro, and split the senatorial slate evenly between the administration's 8-4 coalition and Poe's Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino.

Copies of the PGBI sample ballot were heralded the allies of Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. after on May 3 signed a covenant with Honasan in which the latter announced the PGBI's support for the programs of the President and help ensure clean and peaceful elections on May 10.

The Guardians sample ballot, a copy of which was obtained by the Inquirer, identified the PGBI as their party-list candidate and Honasan as the PGBI's principal nominee for party-list representation. Honasan's term as senator ends on June 30.

A PGBI leader said Honasan, who is PGBI chief campaign security officer, knew about the sample ballot and had approved its release.

The source said Honasan had meant a letter to accompany the sample ballot in which he exhorted the Guardians to abide by the spirit of the May 3 covenant.

"The letter and sample ballot should be taken as one," the PGBI insider said.

Honasan, a Salud coup plot...

HONASAN, A-10

'Hello...' and then the line went dead

By Luige del Puerto

TWO LIVES were lined and five were ordered with beheading.

At around 9 p.m. on Thursday, Elmer Pasaion phoned his boss, engineer Jaime Bautz, supervisor of a construction firm.

Bautz heard Pasaion say "hello" before the line went dead.

"I could not sleep after that. I sensed something was terribly wrong," Bautz told the Inquirer early yesterday at the Mandaluyong police station.

It turned out that Bautz was right to be apprehensive.

Pasaion, an architect, and Angeline Constantino, an engineer, were shot and killed while grappling with holdup men on board a Mitsubishi Gryphon van at around 11 p.m. Thursday night, police said.

The bus with Plate No. PDL 367 was traveling northbound on Edsa-Ortigas Avenue in Makati when three men armed with .45-cal. pistols and a grenade declared the holdup.

Police said the holdup men had boarded the bus on Lourdes Street in Manila. All three are now behind bars as the Mandaluyong police custody.

Bernardo Edrupt, 22, of Lubao, Malabon, could not say why. Between Pasaion and Constantino tried to wrest his gun from him.

"The shooting was an accident. He was trying to grab my gun," Edrupt carefully said in Pilipino. "The other one also tried to fight me off, so my companion shot him."

He said both men signed and died.

Bautz, listening to Edrupt's account, was outraged.

"Just like that?" he shouted at Edrupt. Via fingers trembling with anger. "You shot them just like that? They were gentlemen!"

HELLO, A-10

DEATH rode this bus on Thursday night when armed robbers boarded it but. Two passengers who bravely fought it out with the gunmen were shot dead.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
SATURDAY, MAY 8, 2004
Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

THE OTHER RACE: SENATE PREXY

Drilon-Villar showdown looms

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

ANOTHER kind of campaign has been going on while nobody was looking.

While the presidential and senatorial aspirants were scouring the countryside for votes in the past three months, Senate President Franklin Drilon and Sen. Manuel Villar were silently conducting their own parallel campaigns.

Sources from the administration camp—most members were on and and an administration senatorial candidate—said the two have been wooing their fellow senators in a showdown for the Senate presidency at the opening of the 13th Congress next month.

Villar was likely to wrest the presidency from Drilon by getting the majority support, said the sources who declined to be identified.

A self-made businessman and the Speaker at the impeachment of President Joseph Estrada in 2000, Villar is rumored to run for President in the next presidential elections. Drilon, a seasoned politician, has also been reported as presidential timber.

"We are actually in the process of choosing the Senate president," the administration 14 senatorial candidates told The Inquirer.

He said that while the campaign period was in full swing, Drilon and Villar had been talking to the senatorial candidates who were most likely to win and join the 12 held-over senators in the next Senate.

This was confirmed by an incumbent senator who said Villar had asked administration senatorial candidates Miriam Defensor-Santiago and Robert Barbers for their support.

Drilon and Villar have joined President Macapagal-Arroyo in some of her sorties and Drilon has been issuing statements supportive of the President. Asked who the President would endorse between her two allies in the event the wins, one source said: "The one who gives her the biggest 'S' material support."

DRILON

VILLAR

"The Senate tradition is that the majority chooses among themselves who they would put up for Senate President. Thus, whoever gets the majority's vote within the majority becomes the candidate against the minority nominee," the source said.

There are seven held-over senators allied with the administration—Drilon, Villar, Juan Flavier, Joker Arroyo, Ralph Recto, Francis Pangilinan and Ramon Magsaysay Jr., with Sen. Nick de Castro "who expects to be vice president," Senators Edgardo Angara, Aquilino Pimentel, Serge Osmeña and Panfilo Lacson, a presidential candidate, are the held-overs from the opposition.

The senators said Drilon is running on his core group and "backbenchers" Flavier and Magsaysay, while Villar is said to be backed by his "administration group" composed of Recto and Pangilinan. De Castro is also a member of this group of newspiece senators.

The senators said Villar could get Drilon a run for his money because Villar had more friends and supporters among the senators. Drilon's ace, however, appears to have the cause of Ms Arroyo and who is confident she would win.

Dollar Drilon, Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. of the ruling party Lakas-CMD remained sure about retaining the House leadership with the President's public endorsement of his candidacy.

Sen. Taylor Rep. Gilbert Teodoro, House leader of the Nacionalista People's Coalition and said to be the favorite nephew of influential businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, and Bayanihan Rep. Heracleo Rosal, Libera Party president, are expected to contest the speakership.

'Miting de avance" passe

By Cristina G. Arevalo

THE TRADITIONAL practice of holding a mitting de avance to cap an election campaign may soon be a thing of the past.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said political rallies are overrated because it was a "waste to get in the sun."

"The safety valve is no (olympic trial rallies) is much less today than it was six, 10 years ago," he explained. "The election campaign of 2004 has shown that it was better to buy media time and spare thousand money mounting political rallies... because the exposure in media can get you more votes."

To prove his point, he cited the case of Senate reform he said most voters getting results for candidates and would most likely make it to the Senate because of his name-in our political advertisements in television and radio.

SHARP
Plasmacluster™
Aircons
Clean Aircon, Cool Getaway!
RAFFLE PROMO
Breathe in the clean, fresh air this summer with Sharp Plasmacluster Aircons and get a chance to win the vacation of your dreams, plus other exciting prizes!
Singapore
Palawan
Australia
Sharp DVD Players
SHARP
be sharp

Text messages to power up Namfrel count

By Christine S. Bacino

SOME 50,000 volunteers of the National Citizens Movement for Free Elections would be sending text updates of results in the May 10 elections to help supplement Namfrel's quick count in less than a week.

Using the short messaging system to speed up the counting of poll results is another first not only in the country but also in the world, according to Smart Communications spokesperson Ramon Isberto. The Philippines has been acknowledged as the world's text messaging capital.

Both Smart and Globe Telecom registered billions in net income in the first quarter on the strength of their leadership in the wireless business. But the two companies would assist the Namfrel quick count for free.

Smart's partner here, Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. earlier would allow Namfrel to use its telecommunications facilities to help ensure speedy, secure and accurate canvassing. Hundred volunteers would also get a free load.

Instead of having copies of poll returns, the volunteers would text the results released by the Commission on Elections.

Isberto said Smart would provide an access code where the volunteers can send their messages. To ensure the system from hacking, a PIN code was needed. The PIN code number is assigned to the volunteer reading the text.

Namfrel is a 22 year-old non-partisan volunteer organization dedicated to ensuring clean, orderly and honest elections. It has already numbered 23 operations for both national and local elections, and this year will be its 18th nationwide election.

In a statement sent to the Inquirer yesterday, Namfrel Chairman Jose Concepcion Jr. called on the people, the candidates, and the media to "fulfill our responsibilities to ensure that the May elections will be truly reflective of the people's will."

Clinton expresses support for GMA

FORMER US President William "Bill" Clinton has expressed support for President Macapagal-Arroyo.

In a one page letter signed "Bill," Clinton expressed regret that "he could not personally "swing through Manila" to demonstrate his support because of his upcoming book tour.

Clinton's letter was faxed to the office of former foreign affairs Secretary Roberto Romulo by the former US president's policy adviser for international affairs and released to the press by the president's party.

Clinton said that it was his "honor" to have President Macapagal as his friend since they met at Georgetown University decades ago and said that he was proud of the President's "movement" as a "unified" economic, security, trade official and leader.

"The world has close by taken notice of your leadership. In your short time in office, you've overcome many critical challenges and seem to be making significant progress on many fronts," Clinton said.

President Macapagal is leading in all the polls going into Monday's voting and is generally seen to carry this election, the campaigned on the platform of performance.

Comelec junks six DQ cases vs GMA

By Martin R. Martil

THE COMMISSION on Elections' first division yesterday dismissed six of the seven disqualification cases filed against President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The Comelec junked five of the cases for lack of merit while one was deemed a harassment suit.

With the dismissal of the six cases, only one case is now left pending before the Comelec. This case stemmed from allegations that Ms Macapagal violated election laws which limit television advertisements of candidates.

Comelec Commissioner Resurreccion Borra penned five of the decisions.

Borra said the cases were dismissed because there were no factual and legal basis for the cases and that Ms Macapagal had "immunity" under the Constitution.

"Considering that the President cannot be charged criminally while she is an incumbent, then therefore, we have to dismiss all these cases," Borra said.

The first disqualification case was filed by Pro-Con(stitution) lawyers who accused Ms Macapagal of using PCSO-Health funds for her campaign.

The second case was filed by former Bureau of Land Transportation chief Mariano Santiago who said that Ms Macapagal used P1.4 billion of the road users tax for her campaign.

The third was filed by Alyansa ng Pag-Asa senatorial candidates Manuel Gutierrez Jr. and Olivia "Baby" Cao who had alleged that Ms Macapagal violated election laws and the Constitution when she ordered education officials to read during commencement exercises her message calling on graduating students and their parents to support a "strong and tried leadership."

The fourth case was filed by Mike Planas, an opposition candidate in Quezon City, who accused Ms Macapagal of premature campaigning after it was found that her television ads started airing before the campaign period.

The fifth and sixth cases dismissed were those filed by lawyer Oliver Lozano in connection with the Mayuga deal between Ms Macapagal and the Lopez family and allegations that Philippine Gaming Corp. funds were being used to finance her candidacy.

Yesterday Lozano said in a statement that he would file a motion for reconsideration, saying that two cases he filed were not harassment cases.

He said the Comelec did not even hold hearings on the Mayuga deal and the use of Pagcor funds.

He also said that his petitions were for disqualification, not criminal prosecution, thus, the provision on immunity does not apply.

As this developed, Alyansa ng Pag-Asa senatorial candidate Melanio "Banjo" Mattiluna Jr. yesterday asked the Supreme Court to immediately order an accounting of government funds as he noted that the Macapagal administration had released a total of P1 billion for alleged campaign purposes.

Mattiluna asked the SC justices to direct Malacañang officials to "furnish petitioners with certified documents of the release of the P1.000 billion."

He said the money were included for "force majeure," but were inadvertently given to congressmen, governors and mayors as part of the campaign funds provided to them by the President. With a report from Michael Lim Ubac

VICTORY PREDICTED

Poe camp upbeat despite INC vote loss

Aksyon sa Tunay na Buhay

VRB Chairman, July 2002 - Jan 2004

Governor ng Cavite, 1998 - June 2001

Chairman ng Region IV Peace and Order Council, 1998-2001

Co-Chairman ng CaluBaRZon Development Council, 1998-2001

Founder ng Cavite Rescue 161 Emergency Response Unit

Vice Governor ng Cavite, 1995 - 1998

Chairman ng Cavite Multi-Agency Anti-Drug Abuse Council, 1995-1998

Medal of Valor at International Award of Honor galing sa InternationalNarcotics Enforcement Officers Association na ibinigay sa Albany, New York, USA

International Recognition for Efforts Against Piracy galing sa Motion Picture Association of America at Motion Picture Association International, na ibinigay sa Hollywood, USA

Recognition for Outstanding Achievements in the Campaign Against Child Labor galing sa United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) at National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA)

Hiwalang Lingkod Bayan galing sa Consumer's League of the Philippines

Recognition for Excellence Worthy of Emulation galing sa Office of the President

Recognition for Most Outstanding Peace & Order Efforts in the Philippines galing sa Office of the President

Most Outstanding Governor galing sa Philippine National Police

Most Outstanding Governor galing sa Department of Health

One of the Most Outstanding Vice Governors galing sa League of Vice Governors of the Philippines

Recognition for Outstanding Achievements in the Anti-Drug Campaign galing sa Philippine National Police Narcotics Command

Recognition for Excellence, galing sa DECS

BONG REVILLA

SENADOR

Paid for by FRIENDS OF BONG REVILLA
NS EDSA, Mandaluyong City, MM

By Carlito Pablo

ACTOR Fernando Poe Jr. will win by a margin of 9-10 points despite losing the endorsements of the Iglesia ni Cristo and El Shaddai to incumbent President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Poe's allies yesterday made this re-emphasize prediction a day after it became official that the Macapagal bid won the backing of those two politically influential religious organizations.

"The winning margin projected for FPJ is already taken into consideration whatever effect the endorsement by the INC and El Shaddai may have on the candidacy of Mrs. Arroyo," said former congressman Miguel Romero, spokesperson of the Fernando Poe-Noli de Castro campaign in Pilipinas.

"According to our latest in-house survey conducted by Pulse Research and Consultancy, and Leandro's survey conducted by a foreign embassy, FPJ will lead the GMA bandwagon by a margin of 15 percentage points over Mrs. Arroyo," he said.

KMP-sponsored candidate Ernesto Maceda said the opposition is "competing with 10,000-man swarms of that 11K precinct- winning margin becomes of churning operations which the 10,000-man coalition coalition (K-4 has started to carry out."

"Which means we will have an 8-10 percent winning margin, out of cheating," he said.

Frederic, a compound of University of Sto. Tomas professors while the Arroyo was home has been rumored to be the US Embassy in Manila.

Maceda noted that both Cesarea Aquino and Fidel Ramos won in the 1998 and 1992 elections, respectively, "despite the endorsement of their opponents by the INC."

KMP-sponsored candidate Amado Bautista said that Poe has a solid four million Muslim votes and this "balances out" the INC and El Shaddai endorsements of Mr. Macapagal.

KMP-sponsored candidate Francisco Tatad revealed that Malacañang officials employed secret officers in the Philippine National Police to allegedly "work for a high voters' turnout in pro-Macapagal areas, a low turnout in the anti-Macapagal areas, and to disrupt the election process, if necessary."

Tatad also said that Intelligence Unit 1998 officials are reportedly set to conduct Operations Bantayog which aims to establish voting brands in favor of Mr. Macapagal.

Strange twist in Ecleo slay case stuns NBI

By Jaime B. Balanon
and Carlito S. Fernandez
INS Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—The heated hostility and the tension at the Bureau of Investigation were matched only by the division of a regional trial court judge who entertained another move to "recover" the murder of Siquijor Rep. Ecleo Dalipe.

Homicide charges against brother-in-law Ruben Ecleo Jr. is still pending in another court.

Yesterday, Cedric Bernardino was meted four to eight years of imprisonment by Judge Lily Mercer Suarez of RTC Branch 60 via Bindi Cenas, about 84 kilometers southwest of Siquijor.

The decision was based on the "confession and admission" of Bernardino, who admitted his participation in the murder of Ecleo on January 2002.

Lawyer Reynaldo Esmeralda, NBI director for Central Visayas, was shocked by the ruling because he found Bernardino's admission "impossible and uncorroborated."

Esmeralda said he never knows a case had been lifted against Bernardino, although he had been in the custody of the NBI from December 2003 until April this year.

Bernardino allegedly helped Ben Binsfeld fill his cause at about 9:30 p.m. on Jan. 5, 2002. Ben reached and strangled Ecleo while Bernardino held on to a companion. The victim was allegedly committed within the area of Bantolinayan, Dalaguete and Bantayan towns, which falls within the jurisdiction of Judge Suarez.

The decision tried to get hold from to but he could not be reached for interviews.

The decision shocked the Binsfeld. "We never knew a case against Bernardino had been filed. Some might have been paid to (file the complaint) because he refused to leave Dalaguete. This is pre-cursor the emergence of the true culprits in people Bohon," said Bicky Binsfeld, brother of Alma.

Echo, "separate money" of the Philippine Retired not Homosexuals Association (PRHA), in having punishable charges before Judge those Carmudo of the RTC Branch 10 in Cebu City for the killing of those.

He is currently out on bail to seek medical treatment for his supposed worsening heart condition.

Aglipayan Church, Almeda group also endorse GMA

TWO more religious groups yesterday endorsed the candidacy of President Macapagal-Arroyo in Monday's polls.

The latest to declare support were the Philippine Independent Church or the Aglipayan Church and the Jesus Miracle Crusade International Ministry of evangelist Wilde Almeda.

The President earlier got the support of the Iglesia ni Cristo and the Catholic charismatic group El Shaddai of Bro. Mike Velarde.

Supreme Bishop Obispo de la Cruz yesterday announced the resolution of the Aglipayan Church supporting and endorsing the candidacy of Mrs. Macapagal- to Presidential Assistant for Northern Mindanao C. Piano Jr.

Last month, the Church's national president of Bo Layuan, Bishop M. Pico, personally presented to the President their unanimous of support, stressing the need to support the incumbent President in order to continue the programs she already initiated.

Pico said it he considers was signed by leaders of the Aglipayan Church's various dioceses.

In expressing support for the President, Almeda noted that Ms. Macapagal possesses a sincere platform of government modernization worldwide by her experience as the country's chief executive.

"The JMCIM holds high its values of the fear of God and unquestionable moral values and these are basic basis for the President," Almeda said.

He said that the Macapagal-Duvalde has been achieving political heavens in the country.

In the 1998 elections, Almeda supported the candidacy of Ignacio Jose de Mesa to which was lowered in the polls by defeated president Joseph Estrada.

Left-wing parties see win, hope to expand foothold in Congress

LONG-SHELVED even mainstream Philippine politics, radical reform are hoping to expand their foothold in Congress and reassure parties full of old communist guerrillas into political power in riders.

The prospect of coming shooting by the left-wing Bayan Muna party in Monday's elections has alarmed conservatives within the government and the military, who view communism as the No. 1 threat to democracy here.

"They've revived the anti-communist rhetoric, the old charge that the left can only win in an election by applying force," said Rep. Satur Ocampo, a former guerrilla who took one of three seats for Bayan Muna in 2001 (the lone under a formula that sets aside 20 percent of the House of Representatives for marginalized sectors of society, including workers and peasants).

The conservatives suspect strong links between Bayan Muna and armed communists fighting as the New People's Army in a 35-year rebellion that has killed thousands during 18 years.

Bayan Muna hotly denies suspicions by staying deliberately ambiguous about its relationship with the Communist Party of the Philippines.

During three years in Congress, Ocampo and his colleagues have recorded some modest gains. They have initiated major bills covering wage increases and compensation for human rights victims under the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos. They have organized labor laws and co-authored legislation going overseas workers the right to vote.

"If all goes well, this is something symbolic," Ocampo told me. "The leftists have never been a significant force in the mainstream political life, always underground or in alliance with other forces."

BONG REVILLA

SENADOR

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NS EDSA, Mandaluyong City, MM

FOUR DIGIT 1 8 6 7 (Tomorrow's number) SUERTRES 4 1 9

METRO
Editor Aberdeen S. Ubandoro

MEGALOTTO 6/45 5 6 7 10 28

Voters urged to troop to polling centers early to avoid hassles on election day

By Lolo B. Salamero

ELECTION due to reported ten be hectic in some ways than one, and police are advising the public to turn up at the polling precincts early so that they would have an easier time casting their votes.

Director Brian Dysuyco spokesperson Chief Insp. Garry Aguinaldo said Manila residents would have an easier time casting their votes on Monday if they arrived early rather than late.

"People should avoid the rush in the afternoon. Also, by coming to the precincts early in the day, chances are they would have no problem casting their names or their precincts would have enough time to fix the problem," he said in an interview.

Voting would begin at 8:00 a.m. and would end at 3:00 p.m.

Aguinaldo also said that clearing by the polling precincts should lessen their tensions and bloated or other dangerous weapons at home or else they would not be allowed inside.

Policemen would be wearing at least 50 meters away from the polling places in observance of the regulations of the Commission on Elections, but Aguinaldo said there would still be other personnel and volunteers taking care of security inside the polling precincts.

Security preparations in Metro Manila have been stepped up in the midst of reports of planned terrorist attacks in the area and the recent arrest in Indonesia of two suspected Abu Sayyaf members who were carrying explosives-laden vests.

Aguinaldo said that while the distinct cases on high alert and all available men would be deployed on Monday, the public should also do its part to keep the city safe.

Aguinaldo said Manila residents should keep their eyes open for any suspicious people or packages left lying around polling precincts or other installations. When something suspicious is spotted, people should immediately call the police at Point-117, he added.

Police say Caloocan bombing plot foiled

By Edson Tandoc Jr.

THE NORTHERN Police District Office (NPDO) announced yesterday that they foiled a plan to bomb a political rally of Caloocan City mayoral candidate Rep. Edgar Erice.

The suspects are Erice's bodyguard, Ronnie, and Edgardo Ramos, a retired policeman, also an Erice supporter.

Police investigators are looking into the possibility that the suspects were planning to bomb Erice's rally to gain "sympathy votes" for the mayoral aspirant.

Erice and the two arrested suspects denied the allegations.

Incendiary bombs

NPD director Marcelino Franco told the inquirer that they confiscated two improvised incendiary bombs from a medical bag driven by Ramos about 11 p.m. Thursday. He was on his way to his brother's rally in Sitio Bonga Subdivision.

The bombs were inside plastic gallon filled with gasoline, armed with a detonator, a timer and batteries.

Police later arrested Ramos, who allegedly came up with the plan.

Franco said he received information about the planned bombing on May 6. The informant, a police agent, told Franco he was contacted by some of Erice's men for the planned bombing.

On Thursday, the informant said the plan would be placed in a medical bag and it would be parked near the rally for detonation.

But Ronnie claimed that he was being framed and that his arrest was politically motivated.

Planted?

He claimed that a van blocked his path Thursday night and about eight men of the Special Weapons and Tactics team told him to get out of the cab.

On their way to the district headquarters, the agents also told him to keep mum concerning bombs, Ronnie said.

Ronnie said he did not know anything about the bombs.

Erice said the bombs could have been planted. "My brother has no motive nor capability to plant bombs," he added.

But Franco said the police did not have any motive to plant evidence.

"We are apolitical and we are only interested in ensuring the safety of our people," he added.

Votes for 'Bong,' 'Eddie' may not count–poll exec

UNTIRING CAMPAIGN
Supporters of two senatorial aspirants spare no place in putting up posters of their bets. AUTHOR

By Tarra Quismundo

VOTES for "Bong" or "Eddie" will not be counted in the canvassing slated in Pasay, Quezon, and Sta. Cruz in Manila.

"I have not received any notice from the local office," said Manila District 2 election officer Colleen Ramos, referring to whom the votes for "Bong" or "Eddie" will go during the tally.

Among the candidates Ramos "Bong" Revilla Jr. of the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats (Lakas-CMD) and Ejercito "Bong" Estrada, and Edgardo "Eddie" Gil of Aksyon ng Bagong Asa, are fighting to get the credit for votes for "Bong."

Strap vote

In the case of "Eddie," Ramos said that in the absence of a Comelec order giving it its presidential aspirant Eddie Villanueva, such a vote would be considered as a stray vote and not counted even with the disqualification fellow aspirant Eddie Gil.

"I would follow the law," said Ramos, also a university law professor.

Eddie Gil's name was even changed to be the official list of candidates more than his office done based in its 734 boards of election inspectors (BEI) yesterday.

"Although Eddie Gil was disqualified, there is no order to delete his name," Ramos pointed out.

Name change

Explaining the reorder, Ramos said that Revilla's petition approved on April 24 was "only for change of alias from Esp to Bong."

"The (Ramos') resolution did not order the BEI to count 'Bong' for Revilla," said Ramos.

But, he said, it a vote for "Bong" is counted with an added, but incorrect, surname, "Revilla) or "Bong C," (Comelec) then the BEI would know where the vote would go.

Ramos said he sees waiting for the Comelec to give him or his representatives on what he should do regarding the votes for "Bong" and "Eddie."

Joey named Lakas bet in Parañaque

By Marinel Cruz

THE COMMISSION on Elections (Comelec) has ruled that Parañaque Mayor Joey Marquez is the official candidate of the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats for the mayoralty contest in the city's second district.

The Comelec ruling is tantamount to denial of the motion filed by former National Security Adviser Roilo Golez that he be declared as the official Lakas candidate in the city.

Bitter rivalry

Marquez, a former vice mayor and three-term congressman of Parañaque, and Golez are bitter rivals for the newly-created district of Parañaque.

Marquez said he had expected the Comelec to rule in his favor saying Golez had run under different political party.

"I'm expert to say 'yes sinit' never saying Lakas member si Golez (I expected the ruling because Golez never became a member of our party)," the former mayor told the Inquirer.

Denied due course

The Comelec decision sustained the recommendation of Atty. Esmeraldo A. Lubio that the motion for reconsideration of the COMELEC filed by Golez on January 15, 2004, be denied due course.

Lubio said the petition of Golez was filed out of time.

The assistant said that it was made 60 days from the last day of the filing certificates of candidacy.

The Comelec ruling was signed by Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos and Commissioners J. Borlaza, J. R. Javier, Mehol Sadain, Resurreccion Borra and Florentino Tuason Jr.

"Let the law (document) have its course," Abalos noted the Comelec resolution.

Marquez said he learned of the resolution only on Thursday.

Poll watchers

Because of the Comelec ruling, Marquez will be the official congressional candidate of President Macapagal-Arroyo in Parañaque's second district.

The ruling will also mean that Marquez will be afforded official poll watchers by the Comelec.

Ed Panlilio is the official Lakas candidate for the city's District 1.

Rizal town candidate abducted by 4 suspects

WITH TWO days to go before election day, four armed men abducted a mayoral candidate in Baras, Rizal, on Thursday night, the police confirmed yesterday.

Sr. Supt. Leocadio Santiago, Rizal Police chief, identified the victim as 46-year-old Hyzon S. Otano, the official candidate of the Liberal Party and re-election of Barangay Evangelista.

The police are still investigating the motive behind the abduction, according to Baras Police chief Sr. Insp. Ricardo Miranda.

"Neither Otano nor his relatives have contacted the police to file a case," Miranda said.

Otano, an engineer, is challenging incumbent Mayor Eladio Gonzales and Vice Mayor Willy Ardales. He is considered to be the least likely to capture the town-wide post.

The police said the suspects, inside a dark blue Mitsubishi Lancer, blocked the path of Otano's Ford Ranger along an unpopulated stretch of road.

Otano's companions told the police that four heavily-armed men got off the car and ordered them to open the Ford Rangers.

The suspects carried M-16 rifles and a .45-mm caliber pistol.

The police said the abduction might also have made off with some P700,000 in campaign funds being carried by Otano.

Lianjo del Puerto

Robbers wore PNP uniform

EIGHT men wearing security guard and police uniforms robbed a Chinabank branch in Quezon City yesterday, several hours before the bank could open yesterday morning.

City police chief Sosa Marcelo said the suspects entered the bank's compound about 6:40 a.m. through the steel gate at the back, where all employees enter.

The bank's guards allowed the fake security guards to enter because two of them were armed with rifles and were wearing good uniforms of the disbanded Philippine National Police.

The robbers were visibly police officers, Marcelo said.

Once inside, the robbers disarmed and hogtied the detailed guards.

Then they ordered the employees to get in the vault. They announced the holdup only when the employees were there the vault's combination had arrived. Edson Bendaña and Cyril Pimentel

My candidates

ON TARGET
Alexander Tuguis

sources should have major representation in the Senate. I happen to be from Mindanao.

Senator Orlando and Pong Biazon have proved themselves as excellent legislators. Senate fights for the development like a tiger, Miss Blended Ormoha.

Although advanced in age, Johnny Enrile is a brilliant lawyer and former legislator. He's known for championing the rights of consumers of the overhead by Manila Electric Co.

Only Marcelo will safeguard senate freedom and the right to free speech in the Senate because he's a journalist like me.

Willie Ordaneta's heritage is an intellectual. She will provide much relief to the otherwise dull proceedings in the Senate because of her sexy.

Fred Lim will introduce laws that would make criminals uncomfortable living in our midst. Lim uses a cop who used another's methods in dealing with criminals.

Frank Chavez is a former voice. he praised and is brilliant one at that. He fought hard to recover for the country the billions stolen by the Marcoses.

* * *

Mar Roxas and Pia Cayetano will represent the youth in the Senate.

Dick Gordon is a very handsome lazy, public official who placed the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority which he once headed, in the world economic map. It kind-hearted soul. Dick Gordon is given to helping people in distress.

* * *

My predictions on who will win in the race in Metro Manila?

Lito Atienza will win over Mel Lopez in the Manila mayoralty race. Bruce Rodriguez is virtually winning unopposed in Pasay City. Mel Mathay will get Jinki Sta. Ana mayor's seat from Sonny Belmonte.

In Davao City, where I come from, the controversial but much-loved Mayor Rody Duterte will win over Bert de Guzman. Duterte and De Guzman have contrasting characters. While Duterte is feared by locals and other foreign in the city, De Guzman was considered a weakling of a leader when he was the city's chief executive.

MetroBriefs

Guard slain

A SECURITY guard of the Shoemart (SM) mall in Caloocan City was killed after being offloaded by his lady-pinching man while on duty, early yesterday morning. The victim, identified as 30-year-old Roger Dimaio, a resident of Lincoln St. in Caloocan, sustained multiple gunshot wounds in the head and other parts of his body. Virgie Villareal said Dimaio was shooting guard outside the Shoemart Department store in Monumento, Caloocan City, when the suspect attacked him at 2:30 a.m. Jaime Laudeniano

Maldon shooting

POLICE were hard pressed at the crime scene investigation of Provincial Board member Jose Antonio Salvador after being gunned down yesterday morning in Maldon. About 4:30 a.m. yesterday, Salvador, 46, was driving his car along the Maldon-Malabon road when unidentified gunmen opened fire on him. Salvador was rushed to the Tondo Medical Center at 2:30 a.m. Jaime Laudeniano

Angeles clarification

MANILA Int Domestic Airport (NAIA) shopping, who recently withdrew his residency bid, submitted documents also on Election yesterday to tell the public the real score on the election. Deputy Director Gen. "I only need the truth to prevail. If it runs against Sandoval, I will not be ashamed to admit that this loss, after 7 cold hearing. He said he was grilling sure to find the Comelec already convinced with a decision on April 20 that Angeles is a resident of Pampanga. Angeles said he had filed the Comelec with strong evidence to claim. As far as he is concerned though, his withdrawal was final, and he will join Mayor Senator Bong Revilla's campaign. Through a subordinate, Angeles said the assessment he turned out. Tarra Quismundo

Wanted in Australia

A FILIPINO wanted in Australia for the 2003 murder of a Singapore businessman was arrested by operatives of investigation to volunteer) and children, saying he did so because he wants to prove his innocence. BID arrested Australian officer Atty. Jun Villamor said. The suspect, identified as 49-year-old Alejandro Mendoza, of Colombanan Day dismissal summer detention charges) again Londonia Australia by an Thursday morning after he arrived on a flight from Singapore. Villamor said he presents said Mendoza was one of the suspects for the killing of Singaporean businessman Lim Ah Kee in New South Wales. Australia. Lolo Salamero

Don't vote, MILF rebs told

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Muslim separatist insurgents in the southern Philippines were ordered by their leaders yesterday not to take part in general elections next week.

Ghazali Jaafar, vice chairman of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), said in a statement the group was banning its members from directly or indirectly participating in Monday's elections.

"MILF would strictly enforce its non-participation policy on Philippine elections with corresponding punishment for violators," Jaafar said.

He warned that it had intensified its monitoring network to make sure members observed the ban.

The statement made no mention of targeting the elections or deterring non-MILF members from voting.

The MILF, which commands more than 8,000 fighters, has been fighting for almost three decades for a separate Islamic state in the southern third of the largely Roman Catholic country.

The Philippine government has signed a ceasefire with the MILF and is hoping to have a peace agreement this year to prevent the rebels' stronghold in the southern Philippines from being used as training camps by regional terrorists. AFP

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MURDER IN PARADISE

Police zero in on 5 suspects in Boracay killings

By Christian V. Esguerra, Nikko R. Flores and Nestor F. Burgos, Jr., PDI
Negros Bureau

POLICE investigators are now zeroing in on five suspects in the gruesome Boracay resort murders after a key witness confessed seeing the alleged assailants leaving the victims' house shortly before their bodies were discovered.

Aklan provincial police chief Supt. Orlando Magpantay yesterday said eyewitness and robbery charges are now being mulled against the five suspects.

"We are convinced that we got the killers," he told the Inquirer.

But Magpantay declined to identify the suspects pending the filing of appropriate charges against them.

The family of German victim Anton Bruckenhauser has offered a P100,000 reward to anyone who could identify the killers.

Quoting the witness, Magpantay said the suspects had pretended to rob and kill the 59-year-old Bruckenhauser, one of the wealthier foreign settlers in the world-famous island resort.

The official said the suspects knew that the German kept a lot of valuables in his three-story, seaside villa-hotel here.

The witness, who was called Police One when they first contacted us, was arrested on top of Mount Luho at Sitio Balabag, Barangay Boracay, as violent riots overlooking the island.

Magpantay said the witness saw the suspects leaving the mansion a few hours before Bruckenhauser, his two guests, Swiss national Manfred Schoen and Swiss Jurg Gwerder and Rosa Jaramillo, a Filipina maid were found butchered late this morning.

All bore multiple stab wounds.

Police believe the victims were murdered in their sleep. The assailants ransacked two of the victims' rooms and stole 10 personal items, including mobile phones and a digital camera.

Investigators questioned 20 resident construction workers and other employees in Bruckenhauser's property. The police have released 15 of the suspects.

Police said four suspects gave verbal testimonies linking three to the killings.

But police spokesperson Chief Supt. Joel Soliman said the two suspects have to corroborate their statements.

"However, the information that they divulged gave more than enough cause for the police to make the arrests," Soliman said.

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The WORLD

Editor Lorenzo B. Gloria

Bush apologizes for abuses but rejects Rumsfeld sacking

WASHINGTON—President George W. Bush, Thursday apologized for the abuse of Iraqi prisoners by US soldiers as his administration ratcheted up calls for the resignation of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

But backing to quell international outrage over the mistreatment of prisoners and falling approval ratings at home, Bush vigorously defended Rumsfeld for holding on to Army Gen. Richard Myers, chair of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Meanwhile, the US House of Representatives, by a vote 260 to 50, approved a resolution declaring the abuse by US troops of prisoners detained in Iraq, saying such actions undermined US efforts to garner goodwill in Iraq and would result in a backlash against US troops.

The resolution also calls on the Pentagon to exert "swift, precise" action against those found responsible for the humiliation of Iraqi detainees, which has drawn fire on international scandal.

The publication of new pictures of naked Iraqi prisoners in humiliating positions in the Abu Ghraib jail added new fuel to the scandal.

Images published in The Washington Post included one of a young woman soldier holding a leash tied around the neck of a naked man.

There was also a picture of three or four men bound together in a pyramid in front of cells in Abu Ghraib. Another showed a naked man handcuffed to a bed with women's underwear over his head.

The pictures were among hundreds circulated among members of the US military police and which have been ordered as part of the investigation into the abuses.

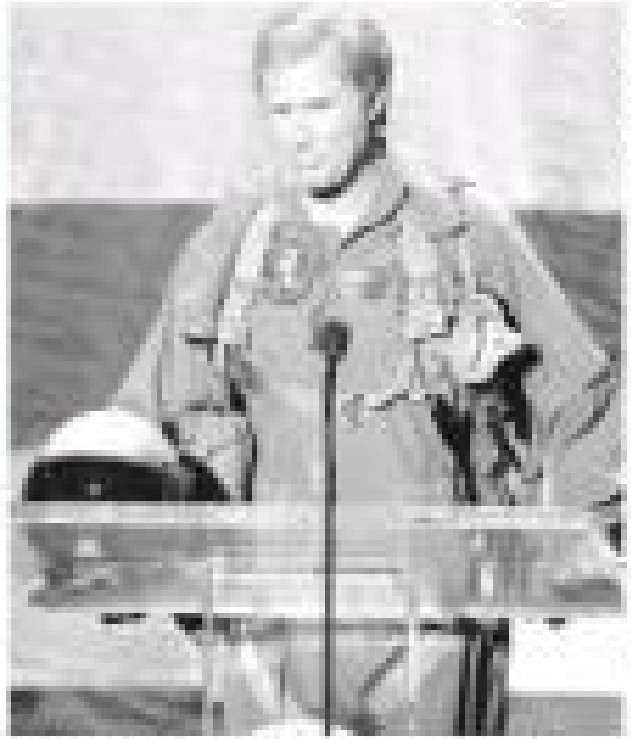
The Arab media generally gave a frosty response to Bush's contrition directed at the Arab world in Wednesday's interviews, preferring to look to actions not apologies.

And how much no surprise from the pro-Israeli president, Iraq appears to be asking much for Bush's personal standing.

The president, who has announced he will seek another $25 billion from Congress to pay for the Iraq campaign, saw his approval ratings fall again in another poll released Thursday.

The Gallup poll for USA Today newspaper said Bush's approval rating of 49 percent was a six-point lower than a month ago and the first time it dipped below 50 percent.

Fifty-five percent disapproved of the way Bush is handling Iraq and 43 percent approved. AFP



ACTOR Will Ferrell, wearing a pilot's flight suit, parodies US President George W. Bush's speech one year ago touting the end of major fighting in Iraq, during "Earth to L.A. The Greatest Show on Earth," a benefit for the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental group in Los Angeles, May 6. REUTERS

Georgia takes control of breakaway region

BATUMI, Georgia—The new government in Georgia said Saturday that after succeeding in bringing the breakaway region of Adjara back under Tbilisi's control, it would now work to bring two other insurgent regions back into the fold.

Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili made a triumphant appearance in the Black Sea region of Adjara on Thursday after the province's leader resigned and flew into exile.

Georgian officials scheduled fresh elections for next month to choose a replacement for ousted local chieftain Aslan Abashidze and appointed an interim administration to run Adjara—the center of the region's biggest oil terminal.

"We have shown the world that we are a game people," a jubilant Saakashvili, the 36-year-old who came to power linked arms with two others, said while arrived in Adjara.

"Only war could have stopped two Abashidze constructions in six months," he said.

In a symbolic gesture, Saakashvili later went on walkabout through Batumi, Adjara's capital, on the Black Sea shoreline where he received ecstatic cheers. He was surrounded by throngs of jubilant supporters chanting "Mikheil!" AFP

'Bin Laden' offers gold for heads of Annan, Bremer

BIN LADEN

DUBAI—A recording described as the voice of Osama bin Laden, posted on the Internet on Thursday, offered bounties in gold to anyone who kills US Iraq administrator Paul Bremer or UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

The recording on an Islamist Web site said a price of 15 kg in gold would also be given to anyone who killed other officials including Bremer's deputy and UN envoy to Iraq Lakhdar Brahimi. The reward would be worth around $220,000 at current gold prices.

The voice in the recording called for a jihad, or holy war, against the US-led occupiers of Iraq, Iraq's US-appointed Governing Council and whoever cooperates with them.

"We in al-Qaida organization are overjoyed to a price of 15,000 grams of gold to who-ever kills Bremer, his deputy, the commander of American forces or his deputy in Iraq," said the voice.

The pro-al-Qaida group captioned the message: "O people of Iraq! A message by Sheikh Osama bin Laden, may God protect him."

The voice sounded like the al-Qaeda leader's, but its authenticity could not be immediately verified. The CIA was studying the recording to decide on its authenticity, a CIA spokesperson in Washington said.

It blamed the Iraqi Governing Council and the "Crusaders"—a reference to the US-led coalition in Iraq—and accused it of handing Palestinian lands to Zionists.

"Whoever kills Kofi Annan of the head of his delegation to Iraq or his representatives, such as Lakhdar Brahimi, will receive the same price," said the voice, addressing the Iraqi people.

Brahimi is in Baghdad for talks on forming an interim Iraqi government before the US handover of sovereignty on the end of June.

The voice offered a bilogram of gold to anyone who killed a soldier or civilian from countries which are "possessors of the veto such as the Americans or Britons."

The United States and Britain have veto powers as permanent members of the UN Security Council. The tape did not name the other three permanent members—France, Russia and China.

The recording offered 500 grams of gold for the killing of nationals of US allies, such as Japanese or Italians. Reuters

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Oregon lawyer linked to Madrid train bombings, is arrested

PORTLAND, Oregon – An American was arrested as a material witness in the deadly train bombings in Madrid, Spain, federal authorities said.

Brandon Mayfield, a lawyer and former Army officer, was taken into custody Thursday by FBI agents, who also searched his home in the Portland suburb of Aloha.

It was the first known arrest in the United States with connections to the March 11 terrorist attacks, which killed 191 people and injured 2,000 others.

Mayfield, 37, was arrested on a material witness warrant and has not been charged with any crime, according to a senior law enforcement official in Washington D.C., speaking on condition of anonymity. A material witness warrant allows the government to hold people suspected of having direct knowledge about crime or to allow time for further investigation into the witness.

Mayfield's fingerprints were found on materials related to the March bombings, said a second senior law enforcement official, also speaking on condition of anonymity.

Bob Anne Steele, a spokesperson for the FBI in Portland, confirmed two search warrants had been served Thursday in Washington County, which includes Aloha. She would not release further details.

Mayfield passed the Oregon bar in 2000 and largely kept a low profile in the Portland legal community until 2002, when he volunteered to represent Muslim terrorism suspect Jeffrey Battle in a child custody case.

Battle was among six Portland area residents who were sentenced last year on charges of conspiring to wage war against the United States by helping al-Qaida and the former Taliban rulers of Afghanistan. AP

A 75-YEAR-OLD woman shows her machete wounds in Yelwa town in central Nigeria, May 6. A Muslim community leader in the Nigerian town of Yelwa said on Thursday 630 corpses had been buried after an attack by Christian militia on Sunday. AP/File

Deaths in Nigeria attack reach 630

YELWA, Nigeria – Armed men massacred more than 630 people in central Nigeria on Thursday in a Nigerian Red Cross official said. The official said the victims were killed in the Christian attacks on Muslim villages in Yelwa town on Sunday.

Survivors and reporters found a fresh 30-by-30-meter burial pit behind a traditional chief's house in Yelwa, a rural community in a northern region of central Nigeria which was attacked last Sunday by heavily armed militants.

"We buried over 630 people. Some people were burned in their backyards. They just attacked us because we are Muslims," said Tukahiru Hamza, Yelwa's 35-year-old local councillor as gunmen agreement from authorities.

"The figure is correct. All the bodies were gathered at the traditional leader's house and those were buried behind it," Umar Abdu Ibrahim, the Nigerian Red Cross' national disaster management officer, said.

"They are talking about 630, but there might be more given the number of wounded," he added. A previous official toll for the fighting had been 57, and a police officer at the scene played down the local people's claims.

It was clear that whatever the final toll, something terrible had happened in Yelwa town on Sunday when it was overrun by gunmen from the Tarok ethnic group, the Christian rivals of the town's mainly Muslim residents.

The fresh pits, still stinking of recent death, lay side by side in a walled compound, overshadowed by a stone tower behind the chief's house that serves as a meeting place in Yelwa, a mainly Muslim market town.

In the streets lay some 7,62 millimetre cartridge cases of the kind used in Kalashnikov assault rifles, which Yelwa residents said were used by the gang.

Large numbers of heavily armed police have now been deployed into the area, but Thursday was the first day that Red Cross rescue officials could safely visit. The army has previously called upon to treat the wounded.

Among the dozens of young men that spiraled to see their bodies and machete wounds bandaged were a baby that had been shot through the foot and another with its jaw smashed. Houses and social mosques were burned out.

"This attack was supposed to be the last one, they wanted to finish us off," said Abdullahi Abdullahi, a 34-year-old member of Yelwa's council of elders.

For the past three years, the southern region of central Nigeria's Plateau State, 300 km east of Abuja, has been prey to clashes and sectarian violence between rival claimants to patches of fertile land. AFP

WORLDBRIEFS

Vatican defrocks 2 priests

BOSTON – The Vatican has defrocked an accused Boston pedophile priest, Paul Shanley, a central figure in the clergy sexual abuse scandal that rocked the Archdiocese of Boston. The Archdiocese said on Thursday the Vatican had defrocked Shanley of his duties as a priest effective Feb. 19. Another accused pedophile priest from the Boston archdiocese, Ronald Paquin, was also defrocked. The archdiocese said: "They can no longer in any way represent themselves as priests or exercise sacramental ministry as they do not have the faculties of the Church," the archdiocese said in a statement. Reuters

'AIDS plot' in Libya

TRIPOLI – A Libyan court Thursday sentenced five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor to death for deliberately spreading AIDS to a children's hospital, sparking fears a medieval-style execution could derail diplomatic efforts to improve ties with the West. The accused were convicted of having deliberately infected more than 400 children with the HIV virus that can lead to AIDS, of whom 40 have since died, by injecting them with tainted blood products. A copy of the verdict on Thursday also showed they have been ordered to pay a total of $4 million in compensation to the families of the victims. Both Bulgaria and the United States, which recently lifted economic sanctions against Libya after more than 20 years, condemned the verdict as "unacceptable." AP

SPORTS

E-mail us: sports@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Teddyboy S. Molmisa
Assistant Editor Edwin M. Villanueva

It's a huge title fight

LAS VEGAS, Nevada—The standing room only world boxing championship clashes between the Philippines and Mexico continues tonight (Manila time) with Filipino Jorgito Espinosa, former WBC featherweight king, [illegible] Mexicans, the security will place more Mexicans than Filipinos with them.

Other Filipinos who had won over Mexicans are [illegible] Rodrigo Torres, Rodrel Pascua (over Humberto Gonzalez) and the Rivera brothers Jesse Rolad (over Jose Estrada).

Reports state[illegible] Mexicans in the Las Vegas Strip, Manuel Medina (2 times), Salvador "Cobito" Sanchez, and Juan Carlos Ramirez.

Pacquiao has beaten Gabriel Mira (to defend the WBC Flyweight crown in 1999), Emmanuel Lucero and Marco Antonio Barrera.

But, based on the magnitude and impact of Saturday's championship bout, a win by Pacquiao over Marquez could [illegible]

MARQUEZ (left) and Pacquiao pose for [illegible]

War brewing in Vegas

MARQUEZ (left) talks at his fight plan as Pacquiao (right) listens intently during a news conference Wednesday at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

Pacquiao foe bares weapon; odds soar favoring Filipino

By Kevin Trinidad

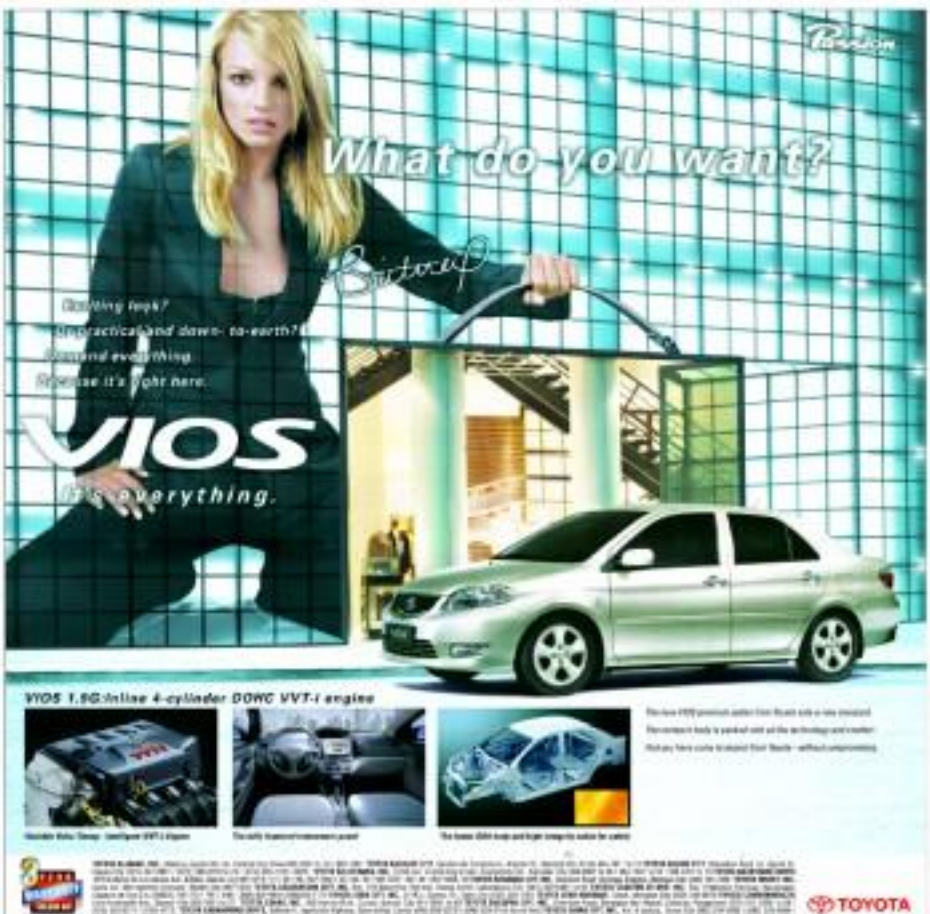
LAS VEGAS, Nevada—His opponents paid tribute to Manny Pacquiao during formal ceremonies on Thursday in the "most dangerous featherweight in the world today."

Moments later, the Filipino boxing [illegible] edge (2/1) to stop #9&10&[illegible] featherweight champion Juan Manuel Marquez [illegible] in Saturday's [illegible] in Manila.

With odds in the gambling capital swelling in his favor, Pacquiao, 25, announced he was now chasing his division's [illegible] Marquez, the [illegible] will be a difficult and complicated [illegible]

Pacquiao had earlier disagreed with trainer Freddie Roach and told the [illegible] Marquez would be a lot easier to beat than Mexican Antonio Barrera. He [illegible] boasting [illegible] he outpunched the Texas [illegible]

"I know Marquez is a great fighter, that's why I have worked very hard," Pacquiao admitted to Bowden Englesh during [illegible]



Tigers seek vital win vs tough Barako today

COCA-COLA tries to cash in on Alaska's recent downfall when the Tigers tackle the Red Bull Barako today in the Gran Matador PBA Fiesta Conference at the Philsports Arena.

Sta. Lucia Realty stunned Alaska, 95-93, in overtime Thursday to the pleasure giving the ailing Tigers a second consecutive date of 9-4 behind San Miguel Beer's 12-1, win-loss record. Alaska skidded to 8-5.

A win in the 4:15 p.m. contest would further boost the Tigers' bid to finish second in the eliminations and clinch the second semifinals quarterfinal slot behind SMB.

Petchsuk hopes to unleash its ace from the grave when it battles Barangay Ginebra in the second game at 6:30 p.m.

The 12 Hardcaps snapped a six-game slide by trouncing the Shell Turbohalcapes Wednesday night.

A pivotman from Argentina and the Johnson national squad will join the top two teams after the 39-game eliminations in the quarterfinals, where teams will be bracketed into two groups.

The top two teams from each group after a single round will collide in crossover pairings in the semifinals.

Sweeping the race of both elimination and stage, however, seems to be a tall order for coach Chot Reyes and the Tigers, who still have to meet Purefoods, Alaska, Talk N Text and Shell.

With the top seeding in the quarters conceded in the first turn, the battle for the No. 2 slot became a three-cornered fight among the Aces, Tigers and the Phoenix Pulsa with the Batangas boys a shot chance.

DAVID AND GOLIAT Hulking Asi Taulava of Talk 'N Text pins down San Miguel's Joey Marcos during a close-ball scramble in the game Thursday in Lucena City. The Phone Pals won, 89-87. ...

STANDINGS	W	L
San Miguel	12	1
Coca-Cola	9	4
PUREFOODS	9	4
Talk N Text	9	5
Red Bull	9	5
Sta. Lucia	9	6
Shell	7	6
Alaska	6	7
Ginebra	5	8
Brgy	1	10
Powerade	1	10

The Batangas lost their last three games and are barely ahead of the Realtors (8-6) and the Gin Kings (5-8).

As for the Hardcaps, their current goal is to avoid landing ninth or 10th crowning the playoffs. The last two teams in the elimination head the third- and fourth-ranked squads twice to advance into the quarters. ...Jane Moreno

Again, that killer stage

SPECTATOR

Al S. Hernandez

JUST my habit. I can't let the cycling marathon pass without having my so-called two cents' worth of comment about it rammed into your consciousness.

So OK now, quickly to Eric Gomez Dominguez, the old warrior from San Carlos City in Pangasinan.

He grabbed the overall lead with the Tigers in Baguio stage via Magsaysay road. That was the 16th stage of the Asia Tour leg (Filipinas of Best Line, my gal buddy that I celebrate on Sundays, let's really in Baguio as host.

Dominguez, 35, did not really win stage honors in Baguio — a mere repetition of history. He would always fade in the mountains after riding mainly the speed boats on flat land.

But this time, banking on his time-tested ability to ring on to a breakaway group peopled by talented mountain climbers like 2003 champion Asiet Quicmot, he finished way ahead of his main rivals for the crown (but not — for reasons only for Dominguez — include Quicmot). Quicmot claimed the four title and was now a factor the rest of the way.

Asked by both, Dominguez posted a 18-minute margin over the second-running Ryan Tangedig at the end of stage 14. Tangedig would have done that for overloaded Dominguez's ability to hang on in the rough and perilous climb from Marcos Highway to Baguio. The truth was, Dominguez indeed merely hung on with his last ounce of courage. Belching snap behind (he lead pack that crossed the line in Burnham Park.

With the yellow jersey now on Dominguez's back, Tangedig's last chance to win was the 15th stage — the Baguio to Baguio (on that would descend on Marcos Highway climb back to Baguio via Magsaysay, descend again on Marcos Highway and return to Baguio via the touch-it-on Benton Road.

Many a time this killer stage would decide the eventual champion of the Tour.

There was drama on the eve of 15th make or break stage.

Carlo Guirela, the hottest hash to back champion in 1991 and 1994, gave rise to Tangedig at last to reclaim the yellow jersey. With help from 1960 champion Dominguez Quilban, a Tour legend himself who also made a name as a mountain climber in his hey day, the three banned the midnight oil to devise a strategy that would dethrone Dominguez. He see, all three hail from Nueva Vizcaya.

It paid off.

How thing Tangedig was told was to exploit his daredevil prowess in the downward racing at Marcos Highway.

"They went back to history and studied Dominguez's record," said Jess Garcia, another Tour legend, who was hoping Dominguez would finally call it a first Tour crown. "They found out Dominguez wasn't good in negotiating hairpin curves during descent."

Garcia was the first to notice the play immediately at the kick of the starting gun in Baguio for the 15th stage. Tangedig raced away.

"I was the first to coach the band 'that day'" said Garcia. "When I saw Tangedig's group hit the land at Marcos Highway and there was no Dominguez, I knew it was over for Dominguez. Tangedig's group came in at a borrow speed and I knew immediately that anyway would produce wonders."

Tangedig, who would have admit he had practiced mainly on Brannan Road, went on to win the stage, leaving Dominguez behind by 22 minutes and 28 seconds. With his only stage win in the Tour, he would remember as the overall basket with a margin of 13 minutes and 25 seconds over Dominguez, who finished 20th for the day. Dominguez would plummet down to seventh overall and, in all probability, would not bother Tour glory the next.

Which the last Tour stages in he was on the tweaks. Tangedig, 25, was the virtual champion of the 17-day Tour. His margin at 4 minutes and 51 seconds over Lloyd Reynante, Manolito Galo in the 15th stage, would remain unchallenged till the grand finish in Manila on Sunday.

The question now is, will Tangedig successfully defend his title next year?

Hard to tell.

Reynante, the son of the legendary and now 10-hazard Mayor, could be ripe for contention next year — his third one.

And then there's Bobet Bautista, the 22-year-old giant hope, who finished second just .80 of a tick behind Tangedig in the fifth 15th stage and went on to win Rookie of the Tour honors.

"Give him two years," said Jess Garcia of Baler Barista, PBPC teammate in Antipolo, Pangasinan. "But if I'll don't handling him now who knows he might win it next year."

* * *

PAYBREAK. Federico B. Agustin, president of Baguio Country Club, has sent me this text message: "Why reading your column on our LPGA champion and Philippine pride, Jennifer Rosales (06/05/04), I decided to commission her as the centennial athlete of the Baguio Country Club as we celebrate our 100-year anniversary on July 18, 2005. She will be entitled immediately to a lifetime green of free green fees at our Club since the anniversary for her inclination to win!" The newly-elected NSAP director has many more perks coming up for Jenny, like free room accommodations, meals, etc. Not-to-late her achievement is the stuff that should have stirred the enduring admiration of the late Nanoy Garcia to if he were around." To Lourdes, mother's great homily, please give Mr. Agustin a call. Best first, ring me up for his number, please?

Korean jungolfer nips Bibat by one stroke

KOREAN jungolfer Kim Chang Hee shrugged off the challenge of Mike Bibat and the other young guns of the Inter-club yesterday to enter on a one-stroke victory in the championship division of the Samsung Amateur Golf Tour kicked off at the Legends course of the Manila Southwoods Golf and Country Club.

The 23-year-old Kim, a student of De La Salle-Dasmariñas University in Negros City, survived a last-ditch stand by Bibat with a two-over-par 74 for a 209 aggregate to be became the first qualifier in his division for the national grand finals early next year.

Kim moved to within one from three strokes down after he birdied the 16th. After both gained the 17th, the seventh-ranking Bibat failed to forge a playoff when he bogeyed the last hole like the determined Korean.

Bibat's last day output of 73 could only give the first-round frontrunner second spot at 211.

The other top Southwoods bets—Lyndon Bagtal, second round leader Tom Nakajima, Clare Bautista and Elmer Lopez—took the semi-last spots.

The event is part of Samsung's all-out support for local golf. It is co-sponsored by Volvo Autos, Gatorade, Taylormade-Adidas, 8201 by Custom Clubmakers, Pink Dots Runway, Copperhorn Spirit, Bright-E and Philippine Airlines.

Bagtal rolled a 74 for solo third at 212, Nakajima and Bautista also had similar 74s to share fourth at 216 while Lopez shared low-medal honors for the day with Bibat but landed only sixth at 217.

Outshining his fay Bayron was seventh at 217 followed by Khet Pachanovos (eighth at 219), Jesse Ilao 78-104, Mike Yao 81-82-2) and John Glen Alcaide 80-80-3 as the 72-hole tourney organized by the Philippine Sports Management Group headed by Boy Dias Gregorio.

The 11 players were the only amateurs among the 22 starters on Tuesday.

The top three finishers received equipment from Samsung.

Old baggages that drag the proud Lakers

CHICAGO—Playing in the shadow of Hollywood finally caught up with the Los Angeles Lakers. They're in danger of becoming just another movie-industry cliche, like "Ulzzk," a cautionary tale about what happens when the chemistry between superstar egos boils down to petulance.

The Lakers? They're not much about sex and not enough about stress. They've wasted during the basketball into a fiddling and debarking into a losing game, losing 2-0 to San Antonio in the first-round NBA playoff series. Inside most, there's an unchallenged pointing at the Lakers' huddle. Only that it looks like an airport information desk.

The trouble this time isn't just Shaq and Kobe, although their feud keeps over the proceedings like a 6-year-headache. It's more about Gary Payton being a 36-40 or two-selfish to change, and Karl Malone being too old and too selfish and coach Phil Jackson being too weary to endure up-or-down happy-feeling.

The captain tried to manage with great skills on Sunday against the team he once played for, but everything about the first two games in San Antonio suggests that he is running outlaws.

"We had some conversations tonight," Jackson said after Game 2, "and some of that was my fault."

No doubt. Jackson must have given up trying to teach Payton or Malone, and he's clear to losing the rest of his squad. He spent most of one first-set sulk on Wednesday night skating at Bryant. Instead of doing as the challenge Kobe cannot possibly see and Shaq had to take over the game all the way by himself.

ARTEST puts up a shot against the Heat's Caron Butler during the third quarter of the game in Indianapolis. —AP

Pacers' Artest proves to be a headache for Heat

INDIANAPOLIS, Indiana—Ron Artest was one migraine headache to more 20 points and Jermaine Bradley was nearly perfect in another three-assist to 17 as the Indiana Pacers rolled to a 94-82 victory over the Miami Heat in Game One of the Eastern Conference semifinals.

Artest missed the shortest and was continued questionable (in Thursday's many questions about Gary Payton being too old or too selfish to change, and Karl Malone being too old and too selfish and coach Phil Jackson being too weary to endure up-or-down happy-feeling.

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The Defensive Player of the Year made 7-of-17 shots, 16-of-19 free throws, grabbed six rebounds and handed out four assists.

"Ron was a monster," Heat coach Stan Van Gundy said. "He has such a great knack for the game. He makes difficult shots—super plays."

Artest said they free throws and Reggie Miller put away the game with a 3-pointer that gave the Pacers an 87-74 cushion with 3:09 remaining.

Indiana got a huge lift from Bradley, who made 6-of-7 shots, including 5-of-6 from 3-point range. He scored just 33 points on 33-of-39 shooting in his first season rookie of Boston. AFP

Delasin, Rosales in strong starts

WILLIAMSBURG, Virginia—South Korea star Kang Soo-yun shot a record 65, taking a surprise 4-stroke lead in the first round of the Michelob Open on Thursday.

"After a few holes, I got a feeling," said Kang, who's been sometimes known as Kevin but didn't want to use LPGA Tour until last season.

Ai Ani Lovely Delasin, missing 10 strokes after taking last week off, was just a stroke behind along with Hikari Mizumoto of Australia.

Jenny Rosales of the Philippines, a breakthrough winner last week, scored five birdie eight after seven on the way to a 67, the same score posted by Australia's Mizumoto.

Kang had four more birdie putts after hitting her 40-degree wedge from inches. She also nearly holed a 7-iron on the par-3 fifth and made the 14-foot putt that remained.

Meanwhile in Charlotte, North Carolina, Bob Eight set a course record Rosales hit to take a two-stroke lead in the Wachovia Championship.

Tiger Woods, back on the PGA Tour after a hiatus, trailed Vijay Singh.

"It wasn't a great round, it wasn't a terrible round. It was just an OK round, and I feel I hurt it was enough 18 holes," the said. "When I first started off today I didn't really feel any adrenaline like when I go into tournaments and I was in that environment mode."

Mizumoto was happy to be back on the opening tee than a year after she was shot again. But it was time to walk away from golf for a while. AP

Asistio falters, settles for third in Jakarta

TOKYO (AFP) — Asistio scored to a 76 in the final round yesterday and settled for third place in the boys' Class B at the Asian Championships at the Grand Indah Golf and Country Club in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Starting the day as the leader, Asistio collapsed with his worst of the tournament to finish with a total of 217 to finish a stroke behind runner-up Laksmanakumar Manoharan of Thailand, who fired a 73, while Indonesia's Alexander Hasiholan claiming second after a 74.

Japan's Ayaka and Sakiko Hosoda had earlier played 308 and 310, respectively, to grab Class A, Hosoda scoring a 77 to win the par-5 fifth and make the 14-foot putt that remained.

Meanwhile in Charlotte, North Carolina, Bob Eight set a course record Rosales hit to take a two-stroke lead in the Wachovia Championship.

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Gujarat clinched to third in front Class C while his team Gujarat also finished third to grab C Class B.

Meanwhile, in the Swimming Azigolf Team, Stefan Andreas clinched his winning streak to five in the 100 leg of the fifteen-race after cruise.

Stefan proved his ability by Romeo Jose 58 Herring with just 56.178, giving her a 20-shot victory in gold Class D. The boys' Class D title went to JP de Dios, who beat Dino Bernardo by 10.

JR Bautista and Brian Dekalbo dominated top honors in Class C while Jamila Rivera and Rob Reyes captured the top awards in Class F.

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Confused?

EDITORIAL

THE COMMISSION on Elections is courting more controversy and risking more turmoil by its insistence on conducting an election quick count. There are many reasons against the quick count, but it is as much a sign of Comelec intransigence as well as its simplicity that it is trying to push through with the count over the objections of every political party and various political leaders as well as the National Movement for Free Elections.

The foremost reason against the plan is essential, one that strikes at the heart of the constitutional mandates of the Comelec. The Comelec is supposed to conduct the election and dutifully count the votes. Doing a parallel quick count is not its job. At the very least, it will destroy the Comelec from doing its constitutional job with efficiency, accuracy and dispatch.

But it seems the Comelec is confused about its mandate. No measure reflects this more so when Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos was forced to admit, after making several pronouncements that the quick count would report the vote from the President down, that the count after all would be limited to the Senate race. This was after several lawmakers complained that with the quick count, the Comelec would be usurping the constitutional power of Congress to proclaim the president and the vice president. "We are under the constraints of the law, we are not supposed to publish [the presidential and vice-presidential elections] results," Abalos admitted. It is shocking that Abalos, a former judge, seemed not to have known in the first place that there is a constitutional issue against the quick count.

The next important reason why the Comelec should not pursue the quick count is practical: it simply has its hands full conducting the synchronized elections and making sure the results reflect the will of the people.

There's simply no basis for the quick count. Namfrel is doing it, using its own resources and manpower, staffed mainly by volunteer professionals. A quick count is basically there to prevent a void in electoral reporting that is critical after the voting precincts close. Since Namfrel and other groups have more or less established a modicum of credibility in conducting the quick count, it behooves the Comelec to step out of it.

More important, the quick count is conducted by electoral monitors exactly as a parallel count to the Comelec's own tally. In short, it is basically corrective and critical. It is meant as a check to the possibility that the Comelec might not be counting the votes right. We must remember that Namfrel instituted the quick count in the 1986 election when the Comelec was perceived—and rightly so—as biased for the strongman Ferdinand Marcos and would count the vote always in his favor. The count somehow dwarfed a blatant distortion by the Comelec then of the democratic and sovereign will of the people.

These arguments have been raised again and again, but the Comelec under Abalos has lent a deaf ear to them. As early as January, for example, former Comelec Chair Christian Monsod had discouraged the Comelec from pushing ahead with the count, saying it would only "constitute additional burden . . . and push the limits of the capability of the Comelec."

Moreover, the machines that will be used for the quick count are the same machines that were purchased by the Comelec from a bidding that had been rejected by the Supreme Court. As Sen. Edgardo Angara said in January, "The electronic transmission (through quick count) is part and parcel of the election automation program but this has already been thrown out by the Supreme Court."

Abalos has already botched the multimillion computerized election system, and here he is wasting public funds on yet a dubious quick count. With the election just two days away, he cannot present what the Namfrel calls "the correct, full and complete voting list." In other words, he cannot even give an honest count of how many voters will go to the polls on May 10, but here he is, insisting that the Comelec can do an honest quick count.

How far out of touch is Abalos? Last April 8, he demonstrated to the media how quick the Comelec quick count was, using a newly purchased P300 million satellite system. The result: the old fax machine beat the multimillion-peso satellite system in reporting the count.

But wonder of wonders, Abalos declared the test "a success" and said, "Be sure as the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, that's how confident I am of our system."

Is this stubbornness or sheer wrongheadedness? Whatever it is, this is terribly bad for democracy.

'Miting de avance'

SEPARATE OPINION

Margaret A. Gonz

THE CAMPAIGN for the elections on Monday ends today, in accordance with the Omnibus Election Code. Each party will be holding its *miting de avance*, or what is remembered of it, across this last already hot, hazy, humid, rainy days before.

The *miting de avance* was a traditional feature of the campaign during the time of the two party system, when the Nacionalista Party under President Manuel L. Quezon and the Popular Front Party under Sen. Jose Avelino long ruled in the weary archipelago.

The premier contestant when Senator Fernando Manuel A. Roxas ambushed Sen. Sergio Osmeña's Party ticket against President Sergio Osmeña and formed the Liberal Party. The contending contest between these two parties reminded the *miting de avance* until President Ferdinand Marcos practically killed both of them with the organization of his Kilusang ng Bagong Lipunan.

The *miting de avance* was a show affair. Between the past participated in it with much enthusiasm from the heady expression of a landslide in the coming polls. The men (and later even women) carried gas-lit torches that to them symbolized the power of their votes and the spirit of liberty. Placards and banners and streamers were displayed as if they were already spoils of victory. There was much cheering and singsonering and good fellowship all around.

Miting was also time of rumor, stick-ups and bomb. The songs were sung by the marchers together as signs of harmony among them, and the bands came from the local municipalities with their best up tempos, drums and precious guitars. There were no featured entertainers to lend some kind of glamour to the march because it was supposed to be a political gathering. It was never a gloomy stage show.

The high point of the *miting de avance* was the arrival of the marchers at the place where it was to be held, usually the principal plaza in Manila when it was the center city of the Philippines, else held in the Plaza Miranda in the district of Quiapo. That used to be the most important political forum in the whole country before it was converted into a shopping mall openly selling bodies of "Nang per eghs."

President Ramon Magsaysay, ever sensitive to public opinion, required every idea suggested at least to be first approved at Plaza Miranda. It was here that the people booted Party supported by President Roxas. This was the venue of no assassination attempts against him in 1947 and years later against his party-mates. In 1953, Marcos, not yet a dictator then, shouted his angry damnit to the incumbent President Elpidio Mamapaal in "Mr. dyesa!"

The local candidates in Manila also held their *miting de avance* at Plaza Miranda. Mayor Arsenio H. Lacson was a crowd-getter who always filled the place whenever he was expected to speak. I am proud to recall my own debut, after whom that street in Binondo is named, who was superb leader with his guests Tagalog and often spoke in the sometimes arena.

No less important, Plaza Miranda was also the disputed shooting place where the Supreme Court first held sway. But close and prolonged danger rule as the liberator was not for the exercise of freedom of expression.

Where is the *miting de avance* now?

The *miting de avance* was a collective effort of the political party in honor its chances in the coming by emphasizing its record and achievements, the validity of its platform and policies, and the merits of its candidates. It was aimed at underlining the solidarity of its members in endorsing its slate candidates, especially its leaders, as shown by their delegates at their conventions.

Those objectives are no longer sought by the present political parties, which is why the *miting de avance* of the past is no more. There are vestiges of that old celebration, for celebration it was, but the sentiments now hinges more than ever on the exciting climax of the election campaign.

The keynote of speeches of the past political parties was unity. The foremost objective was victory for the party not for particular candidates. Theoretically at least, each candidate campaigned not only for himself but for the sake of his party colleagues. Thus, the success of the candidate carried his present and future on one side and printed the name of his party and all its official candidates at the back.

Have you noticed how the candidates campaigns for the elections? In the mid-to-do-now campaigns, the candidates' parents, teenagers and tomtoms, and other propaganda exercises, the candidate was campaigning only for himself, frequently not even for his party, and not at all for any of the other candidates. It was everyone for himself. The presidential candidates represented no party, and were not even chosen as the usual conventions. Many people would not even remember the names of the political parties, let alone their platforms, if any.

The *miting de avance* has vanished in the confusion, disunity and ineffectiveness of the present political parties' campaign. This may be one reason why the coming elections may be an anomalous and wasteful exercise of the Filipinos' precious right of suffrage.

My vote

GET REAL

Solita Collas-Monsod

IT IS not true how many nominated votes the Iglesia ni Cristo and El Shaddai leadership really have at their disposal (some analysts have made a strong case that the "total swing-bloc" attributed to these organizations is a myth), but it is clear what constituencies they seek to re-assure in making their choice. But, whether coincidental or not, the fact that their support for Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo came on the heels of the surveys showing her survival in a seriously significant boat, reinforces the suspicion that the overriding consideration in that choice is "winnability."

It's the constant in force-swing. They're not influencing the votes of voters, they are influencing their fears. Or just another way, they don't hate the other, they just put icing on it, and then try to get credit for the whole thing. And if reports in the media alone (and give quite are accurate, they get huge rewards for this behavior. The ultimate scam?

I am like these organizations in that I have taken a long time to come to a decision on whom to vote for. But my one can claim that I am jumping on any bandwagon or casting my lot with the "sure" winner, because I am voting for Sen. Eddie Villanueva.

And so, it is not because I was looking for a messiah, as my friend Dave would say. I defend my decision as a rational one, albeit one that took an agonizingly long time. And one that I shall be transparent about, at the risk of offending the ostentation and their supporters.

For each candidate, I compared what was happening for and what was going against him/her, the planks and statements, if you will, applying what is called marginal analysis, the theoretical tool for optimal decision-making. I determined the constituents who had more going against their lives for their behavior the marginal (or child) were negative) and then dealt with it by evaluating these by trying to determine which one promised the highest marginal net-yield.

It may sound straightforward, but it is anything but. I was not comparing financial scenarios (IBM and Bank). In terms of recognition and lack of people skills, they were about even. Bayo had a clear edge over GMA in the mega-item issue, because neither he nor any member of his family was current. He also had the edge on dedication, as well as on kicking corruption. GMA had the clear edge on economic understanding, because, after all, she is not here to be a Ph.D. or be an intelligent customer of economic information. So, overall, I was inclined to Bayo. But I got sidetracked. There was the fear that voting for him might lead to an FPJ victory (who does one always think that the Filipino people are dumb?). And I leaned toward GMA again.

Then I got myself out to self-destruct, and it is hard to say whether he hurt himself more by opening his mouth or keeping it shut. And GMA's appointments at the Commission on Elections were so obviously self-serving, to totally me-first-before-country that I would no longer give her the benefit of the doubt. So the issue is a one-on-one field, "the issue of two evils," "the is it well a one-on-one field, and is it still "evil."

At the same time, information on Villanueva became available, and what I saw and heard was impressive. The fact that Eid Kabalo stood behind him was impressive. The fact that Villanueva brought to the table administrative experience (running a three-million-strong organization), a good reputation among his colleagues, no political baggage of owing no one in particular, no cause of corruption—and a clear and credible platform (corrupt point taken talk about fighting corruption, and "you must to do").

So my choice was down to either Bayo or Villanueva. Then Bayo had unethical problems, and while he has come back, and to finally to take the issue on, I still think that the edge in Kabalo's favor (for it, the presidency is a 24-7 job), and in the political baggage department.

And that explains my vote.

No need to cheat

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

INDEPENDENTS have joined ex-President Macapagal-Arroyo and her running mate Noli de Castro, notably from the Iglesia ni Cristo, El Shaddai and the Alliance for Christ's Undercover Catholic Bishops are quietly engaging for them, word on well as from the civilians' groups, sectors or dioceses in Metro Manila campaign. One might say that on the eve of the election, the race for the two top posts is all over. The question seems to be, how big will the margin be over FPJ?

That is a good development, as it will make citizens realize that the opposition's charge about massive cheating by the administration has no basis. For why would it cheat when it can win fair and square?

But whether the Commission on Elections can contain the elections and supervise the counting difficulty and fairly is another question. If there should be massive cheating in favor of the administration, it will perhaps be attributed to the bungling of the Comelec.

* * *

Undersecretaries such as those of the DSC and El Shaddai number at least 30 each. Assuming that each of these groups can deliver a few million votes, but they are better apportioned in rural fights. In San Fernando, Pampanga, was thanks of mine, Arroyo can count on the provincial governor, Congressman Gerardo Gloria-Dominguez, who is running under Lakas-Kampi, and Rep. Oscar Rodriguez, the Lakas official candidate. Rodriguez is also the brother of Jaime Rodriguez, named by Arroyo as her appointee, whose one necessary in order to secure the counting out or marking those non-cooperative. She also gave the DCI a natural collection of over more than P15 billion through the difficult years of '97-'11, SARS, the Bali bombings, etc. On the other hand, Rodriguez could not in legislature work during his three terms.

* * *

Santiago seems to be the only major edge in the run for the city's 400,000 votes because of her excellent machinery and infinite organ. This edge was recognized by the DSC when it endorsed Santiago for the Senate in the May 14 election. The DSC supports Santiago 10,000 more votes in Quezon City.

Interestingly, Ghil, caught between two close associates who are both running her in their districts, has skipped San Fernando in her campaign sorties.

* * *

"I want to center at 60 and turn to pleasantville things, like dancing," says Santiago when she has right now, she's waiting at the deplorable poverty in Pampanga's seemingly progressive capital, which, she says, badly needs a city hospital, high school and cemetery. For me, former Health Assistant Secretary Eric Santiago, 35, a UP-trained graduate trained in ophthalmology in the University of Indonesia in Jakarta, is also running for the seat vacated by Rodriguez in Pampanga's third district. The DSC accordingly could get for him a 30,000-edge over his rival, former San Fernando Mayor Bobi Aquino, another doctor.

* * *

In Batanguas's second district, former Representative Hermilio Mandanas' brother Ludovico is said to be running for the Senate soon, judging from the former Lukso survey. Ludovico's opponent is Batanguas Mayor Jose Mandanas, but the latter has been severely damaged by recent scandals, 188 graft cases and charges of indemnification. Ludovico has the support of Governor Vilma Santos, who is running against in common bet, Joey Sarte, son of former Batanguas Governor Oscar Sarte. Both Mandanas and Sarte are running for the Senate.

* * *

In Camarines Norte, two big local names are fighting for the lone congressional seat. Former BIR Commissioner Governor Marissa Duran of the famous Vinzons clan is running against incumbent Rep. Jesse Robes, son of former Interior Secretary Rafael Robes. Both are well-known and command hefty campaign resources, but Duran, has served with the on the board of the Asia to Kuwait Foundation for many years and I know she'd be a real asset to the House when woman measures originally.

* * *

Running with the formidable ticket of Mayor Sonny Belmonte in Quezon City is multi-awarded city councilor Jonah Ejercito Estrada, who attended a development economics course in the JFK School of Government in Harvard University. Jonah, who belongs to an old Tondo family, is running for the Congress in the second district. She notes that over the past 10 years, the mayor and the representative of the district have come from opposing camps. Now she wants a show of unity. Jonah's wife Bernadette can do for that district.

* * *

I'm glad to note that despite the prevailing concern about our politics, many young people have entered the political fray. Besides Jonah Estrada, Jam in the senate, albeit it needs reforms badly like a Executive Secretary Alberto Romulo's daughter, lit professor Bonna Romulo Puyat, who's running for the Senate on Lakas-Kampi's ticket; another is Joseph Bruce Ilagan, son of former Agusan Sabrot Secretary Jorge Ilio Ilagan and Agusan Vista of the PDSP, who's running for congress. Let's hope that the young people will bring a hopeful feeling of optimism with a refuge them in former senator's management from Ito de La Salle's College of by Benilde, who later attended to the Harvard Business School. College in the '80s, he went to develop a strong community youth sports program for his district. It can be this as it is the best antidote to the pernicious drug problem in our city.

Today, later ends with a laugh that let's working the circus politics was that the star in running for senator has refuse to himself run for Congress in 1998. As such, he was GMA's organizer in the five districts, working in tandem with Belmonte's "green group," and he says he's "simply crazy" for it.

* * *

If you failed to see the fantastic interview of Bobcaygeon drummer's former bull, Gerbie, by Boy Abunda in the latter's program, you missed a real treat. It was today at 2 p.m. and tomorrow at 9 p.m. Gerbie simply overwhelmed the irrepressible Abunda.

Violence begets violence in Thailand

All the Philippines prepares for its presidential election, the leading secessionist dissident power to consider the tragic developments in southern Thailand. Events in the three majority Muslim provinces of Yala, Narathiwas and Pattani deserve the grave concern which Jakarta can be expected.

The massacre of over 200 machete-wielding teenage boys is a terrible consequence of one man's... Thaksin Shinawatra—irresponsible and pigheaded head rending.

EYE ON ASIA

Karim Rashid

The mounting love between is southern Thailand, the combination of violence, the killings and reprisal killings unbelievable in last week's time never can be erased. Back to a series of malaishish invasions taken by the simplistic and inexperienced premier.

The atmosphere of fear and insecurity in the three majority Muslim provinces of Yala, Narathiwas and Pattani is unprecedented. Others, Thailand's senior the guidance of King Bhumibol and the Buddhist party under former Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai has always managed to control the south with a mixture of negotiation, accommodation and force, when necessary.

It seems highly probable that General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh's decision to run for governor will now be placed on the position of supreme Buddhist Sangha. This has by no means to exclude or application over in the aftermath of 9/11, the American led invasion of Iraq and the "Bad guys mission's decision to deploy troops in Iraq.

Unlike the situation in Sout-hern Philippines where a Roman Catholic majority is faced with a Muslim minority), the three majority Muslim provinces had managed to achieve a measure of stability in the years preceding Thaksin's premiership. Thaksin's divisive and authoritarian manner—most appropriate for the crony capitalism of Southeast Asian boardroom—as well as his "hands-and-shins" approach to government, is implicit rejection of such nuanced-handling has angered and estranged the country's Muslim population.

Abhisit Vejjajiva, a prominent opposition figure explains "There was a clear and positive trend in the South before Thaksin assumed power. The situation had improved overall, widely regarded as a success story and model for others." Worse, Thaksin's strategic decision-use the 'dictatorship of the aggressive 'business' approach to the infinitely more complex task of managing a nation."

Much of the credit for the initial peace in the south must be given to the strong leadership of the Thai monarch, King Bhumibol as well. His position of power and effectiveness during days enclosed over the decades between the different sections of the administration and the security forces.

While the system was flawed—the Committee for Coordinating Activities in the Southern Provinces and its military wing, the 4,000 United Force, gave too much authority to the military—it was able to contain the violence within acceptable parameters. Moreover there was an acknowledgment of the region's very different ethnic and cultural pressures as well as attempts to accommodate the wishes of local leaders.

However, Thaksin ignored and then diminished these painstakingly developed arrangements. Imposed a martial law to repeal further, the premier abolished the 4th committee, thereby creating a power vacuum that was never entirely resolved.

Surapon Pongchaiyuth, a political analyst with a Bangkok based think-tank, is critical of the 'wisdom of 'imposing martial law on southern Thailand. "It was not the best counter-measure—many of whom are either support—very badly it's made them more anti- government and sympathetic to some insurgents."

The premier's attempts to shift attention away from the unrest in the region has also backfired in the decades indeed the region's Muslim's cooperation in the policy flip-flop with the theBurgan II, the predominately rural and jungle based security.

As Bertil Penggaard, foreign editor of the Thai language daily Matichon who was born and lived in the southern city of Songkhla, explains: "The South is extremely complicated. There are a lot of Muslims in the police and army who are insiders and national-level politicians. You can't remove old structures overnight. Reforms need to be negotiated and thought through."

The overwhelmed of power under Thaksin has also seen—maybe stimulated, as underlying culture of corruption at the highest levels of policy-making. Corruption, the traditional lubricant of a high profile, out-drug war has cost far-which an estimated 3,000 people died in a series of semi-judicial killings) displayed a worrying disregard for the established legal processes and the country's constitution.

Surapon argues: "Thaksin sought to employ the same strategy in the south as he did in the north. The only method is employing the broader population even more.

"His CEE-style has emphasized an environment where immediate results are expected—an area in what the cost, legality or politicality. A classic example of the is the allegation that the kidnapping and murders of the Muslim activist Somchai Neelaphaijit was carried out by security forces."

An added embarrassment to the premier has been the allegation that members of his own political party, Thai Rak Thai, actually financed behind the Jan. 4 raid on the Bannang Sata Armoury in terra base in the south.

If Thaksin and his colleagues succeed in an attempt, they will make a mockery of the premier's much-vaunted tough stance on law and order as well as further undermine the Thai Rak Thai's flagging credibility as a force for change and reform.

The situation in Thailand's "Deep South" will only be overcome when Thaksin manages to control his personal weaknesses and the excesses of his colleagues and party. Military force and hard-headed.

The premier will only succeed in purifying the south if he learns from the lessons of the past: that violence only begets violence. He should embrace as much as to the Muslim population...both its religious and secular leaders...and attempt to win over their hearts and minds.

The Philippines and the two leading presidential candidates have much to learn from the Thai premier's catastrophe, a breeding of events. Force alone begets hatred and an escalation of violence.

It's not too late to disprove Hamtaguan.

Loida Lewis on GMA's learning curve

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

LOIDA Nicolas Lewis (Ian) have "blue-ted" her position as chair and CEO of Beneficio TLC, which until she sold many of its components had been one of the country's largest food companies, but she hasn't retained control of the conglomerate or broken new ground in China, the Philippines and other territories by keeping a low profile and staying away from controversy.

Taking advantage of that relationship, she has earned for her the right to own property and invest in not her country, but also in which does not have political affairs. And she must she to undertake to do so without the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo administration.

Addressing a meeting of the Kabuhayan para Lay Gloria at Bayan (Sagalay), Loida linked her life story and her business to her interest in the arts. She is the daughter of Nicolas Nicolas, who started the president of a country as CEO of once a small corporation, goes through a "learning curve," she says. Many are limited to step into the business's owners-in-chief and had "no clue to what to do and how to do it." Loida, who is the wife of Reginald Lewis, "it wasn't easy" for the fact that she held "majority control" of the shares, which at first we did not know was landed, even if the other owners were not family members.

With three years of government behind her, the President, says Loida, has already gone to pass her own learning curve and can pursue her goals straightforward, whenever how long-term or short-term they may be. She has also learned to "delegate authority" and not micromanage, rather than personally supervising every branch with his own hand, etc. "Continuity" is something we need with Loida.

But for GMA to retain a firm hand and pursue her objectives, Loida says, she will need "majority control," in the thousand votes a month to every seven votes she can get her own Monday.

* * *

ALL things being equal, I give the edge to women candidates, reasoning that greater balance can only enhance most representative government and more responsible policies and laws, but also that women contribute something that is more to politics.

But women are no more homogeneous or

Portrait of the artist

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Ramon C. Bautista

"TOURNAMENT said to sing. "

English leaders of my generation read Walt Whitman and were struck by how Americanese of every as the man's command of the language. To use a cliché, he played it like a violin virtuoso. With the passage of years, it was painting what it could not be transformed into the big screen. Even after the film version of Whitman's "Leaves of Grass" was released with Robert Carradine as Walt Whitman, the question of sensibility, you either understand what he's trying to say or you don't.

Back then Prof. Teodoro Locsin Jr. took our literature class to his Pico Pena office to meet the great man himself and possibly work on his novel in progress. In exchange for a case of beer, which our barrio salitre had sold the dialect's minister who was not only very kind but must have just enjoyed seeing a bespectacled teen-ager who was a member of his dear friend Virgie Montes who could always persuade him to support her projects and even attend meetings of literary whose in prompty chronicle everybody's indiscretions.

To this day I look on through surprise who has captured the imagination of Filipino readers about a particular era in Philippine history the way Joaquin del. True, Rizalin outdoes the guts and despair of post-war Manila but while the vision is equally valid, I do not know if we would like to encounter Joaquin and sing about it or just get away from the city unless as possible.

Besides the I get the impression that Bienbia "found" Manila the way Joaquin did. Of course, Joaquin's Manila may have been more of his child-hood than a contemporary setting, but it was there as a stranger in his imagination, a mystic city for that doesn't make it any less real. He rendered it in close and power-full texture with all the colors and flavors of a masterful painting come alive.

That again he was a romantic, Locsin, who is reminiscent to Joaquin's "Pinas sin Penog?" wasn't

than the author knew or was the world "afraid." For many of us it was a glimpse of a world we never knew but a world that the writer obviously loved, a beautiful, ruthless and tragic land that was destined because what took in place was common, a lie and confusion.

As his books I wondered why it was being held at the Sanctuario de San Antonio in Makati. It seemed to me he belonged to Intramuros, that Agoncillo specifically, some of the other writers will be there—Sto. Domingo, Barrioca, the Francisco and San Ignacio—were bombed and buildozed. The family is across the thought of building the writers at San Domingo in Quezon City because of his devotion to La Virgen. On the other hand, this decision may save the Japanese-back printed possessions, as we did think give the Virgin the model be received in National decay in 1998.) But the Bohol Fish that many appeared to be the most appropriate. "Be young, devoted, the city, the cinema, the bars, the discotheques—they all went in pre-Cleo" no respect.

Joaquin's themes are universal: love, desire and the grip of the past, honor and dishonor, the war of the sexes. A recurring theme is an aging, dominant male figure, bewildered and controlling her sons and daughters...look a more and a blessing, and perhaps from Joaquin's point of view, that is what the past is until you realize and recognize yourself in it.

The creation of a country is highly consciousness the current count: mother, for, for preserve images of

years. But since I am determined to fill up the date of 13, I will also include in my ballot. Patrick "Pato" Roman, because his late boy-pronouncing is such a refreshing change and because I believe that, with Santos, he can effectively articulate the aspirations of Filipino students; for Sonny because his grasp of finance and economics makes him a valuable member of the team; for Ping because I have to not support legislation for reproductive rights; because Santiago is...because he will champion the cause of people with disabilities and members of other minority groups; and Angara because he is the only candidate who I have often disagreed with, but who stands out in contrast to the rest of the "senatorial-able" army.

Pa, I know, I need not waste time to fill up my ballot with names that I hardly know enough to...having made those 12, as I'll sleep on the last name.

* * *

Of course I cannot end this column without a word on Atenco's Pinas, the women's participation group. It's a very good capable. From her father in the mind to give votes to women to politicizing and the waking of have, and if you believe that women deserve priority in the national agenda, then vote for Atenco's Pinas group.

I am particularly excited about the prospect of bringing into the legislature 'Atenco' Pinay's top three nominees: Bonnie Ribbon, Alice Bermido and Socorro Bocaten Los. Both is only and coherently, they represent a wealth of experience, competence, courage and vision that can make earth-real legislators.

Pioneer as mother my friend Lorna Kapunan, who is heading the Board of Trustees. Despite the busy edits and the daunting prospects...

I also recently met with Leander "Tanning" Cruz, who is part of the legislature making Bobbie Mercado-Kinard be her case of broadcast panel. Cruz appeared her husband Tanny and making urged for a version of her brother Angel Bay Cruz, who is contesting the mayoralty of Bagnan, Bulacan. Tanning reaches for her mother's interests and—considering the fact that Angel's opponent—Tanning's word is good enough for me.

Only one Nick Joaquin

MORE on what you can do today! How can I say no for falling to send this letter of "How are you Nick?" when I heard he was not "all too good" from Greg Bituin and Johnny Codvinian.

The sad news came from a text message. Sen Frisi Mani Lacaba. The Lacabaverse always in the company of Nick. The last time I saw Nick was at Abaya's. He had an taped a panel for "Three Widows and Their Sons." The authors were Ong Lacoc, Emy Arvilla and myself (SHE Gonzalez's student). The show was Nick Joaquin. Mani explained to me that after making the stand-ins of Aling Nick didn't do any "shots" for us. He stuck to his borders of beer and the Lizardo Se his side. The windows huddled together Between singing and drinking Nick would signal us for "pambihira." They'll go some late, give him a kiss. Nick would felt on a P100 bill and proceed to rock n' roll mates.

I have always wondered at Nick's voluminous memory of the "nineteen forgotten" songs. He'd hum or the words choosy and Lala, Mass Lasing and myself knew some first lines and, economic Pepe sangin Nick some naughty songs. However, Nick sounded singing them at home.

RVM and I met Nick in the early '50s. Nick said it was RVM who published him first in the Evening News Magazine. When I saw Nick after some years of stay in California, he said, "You were afraid of me because I was always drunk." I really don't remember.

I wonder why I never asked Nick to be young to one of my four children. The widow I asked were Ben Santos, Manning Clark, Arnold Duamay, Gemino Reyes, Estrella Santos, Lina Tito and Alfredo Morales.

Nick was our guest speaker at the first RVM Awards Literary Contest. The event was held at the Kalaklanan Center of RVM in Area 1, UP Campus. Nick once praised with some. I'm happy I found the note in His pieces included in a monumental book "Remembering RVM," now in the UP press. Andy Gail said, "This is his only copy. He doesn't want duplicates." Nick seems in long hand for this speech.

I'm glad I asked Mel to write the foreword of "Where? Were," a book I edited. I rarely had long conversations with him. He'd never accept and involve like repeat "Hello darling," when he saw his version friends. But I miss that "hello Ate boy." He sure can say that he was only Nick Joaquin did.

—GILDA OLIVEROS-GONZALEZ,
UP Campus,
Hilltop, Quezon City

LETTERS

Appalling BIR proposal to tax OFWs

MIGRANTE International, an alliance of overseas Filipino workers' groups, strongly denounces the new proposal to tax OFWs.

In many countries like Canada and Hong Kong, OFWs are already taxed. If approved, the resulting "double-taxation" of our compatriots would be a double whammy on their already low incomes.

We were pleased when once among compatriots and double taxation avoided a row with the passage of the Tax Reform Act of 1997. Behind the passage of that law, OFWs paid 1 to 2 percent taxes on their incomes.

Thus the Bureau of Internal Revenue now seeks to reverse the gain in unjust and only person that under the Macapagal administration, OFWs are the "cash-point" and "milking cows."

It's appalling that BIR Deputy Commissioner Kim Jacinto-Henares is blame OFWs for the drop in BIR collections. Where, about the billion in tax revenues due because of negligence, corruption and tax breaks to multinational corporations?

Instead of going after the increasingly meager wages of OFWs, the BIR should prosecute and jail big-time tax evaders.

OFWs already contribute much to the Philippine economy. Were the country's top dollar earners and consumers regularly help keep the plummeting peso afloat.

In February we sent back $526 million in remittances, the highest in five years. While in 2003, remittances through official bank-to-bank channels only—totaled almost $6 billion. This is in addition to the millions of pesos we pay directly to the Philippine government for the processing of our passports, SSS clearances and travel $25 Overseas Welfare Workers Administration membership fee.

Almost daily, the Macapagal administration comes out with new anti-migrant measures and schemes. This proposal to tax OFWs is only the latest.

—BARA LAMBERTO,
secretary general,
Migrante International,
45 Bayanan ave Marikina Hts.,
UP Village, Quezon City

Paging Naia general manager

LAST Sunday April 25, I took my son-in-law to the Ninoy Aquino International Airport to catch his early morning Northwest flight to Toronto. What I witnessed appalled me:

1. Two minutes allowed for parking. I barely got out of the car and managed to get the luggage out when the allotted two minutes for parking was up, and I was told to move out by an airport guard.

2. The long queue at boarding which kept getting longer because of the random examination of travel documents by airport personnel. This was early morning. I can imagine what it must be like lining up and getting scanned by the noon-day sun. What a way to promote tourism! Why not allow check-in at Terminal 2 and then bus passengers at the time, or designate several places in Manila or Makati for passengers to check in their luggage, etc, etc. the point is obvious!

3. Except for a few decrepit push-carts, there were none available to passengers. For the substantial sum or fees collected every day, I think decent carts can be purchased and made available as an extra to the traveling public.

I wish President Macapagal-Arroyo can take the time and make a surprise visit to the airport before May 20. It will surely bring her more votes and appreciation, particularly from departing overseas Filipino workers.

—FRED S. IMIL,
131 Tamarind St.,
Bermuda Village, Makati City

MANIFESTO:

SONNY OSMEÑA DOES NOT DESERVE THE SUPPORT OF THE CEBUANOS/BISAYA

Don Sergio Osmeña and Serging Osmeña were among the most admired and respected leaders from Cebu. Mayor Tomas Osmeña and Senator Serge Osmeña carries on their legacy of devoted and selfless public service.

But another Osmeña had disgraced the family name and brought untold embarrassment to Cebu.

John Henry Osmeña (alias Sonny) addresses the Cebuano electorate as **"Haring Lungsod."** But after the elections he treats himself as **"Hari sa Lungsod,"** insulting, harassing and oppressing anyone who blocks his quest for wealth and power.

Many individuals, institutions and groups have experienced Sonny Osmeña's legendary vindictiveness. Even the University of the Philippines is not spared, just because he dislikes its President who happens to be a fellow Cebuano. Sonny Osmeña cut UP's budget by over P114 Million Pesos.

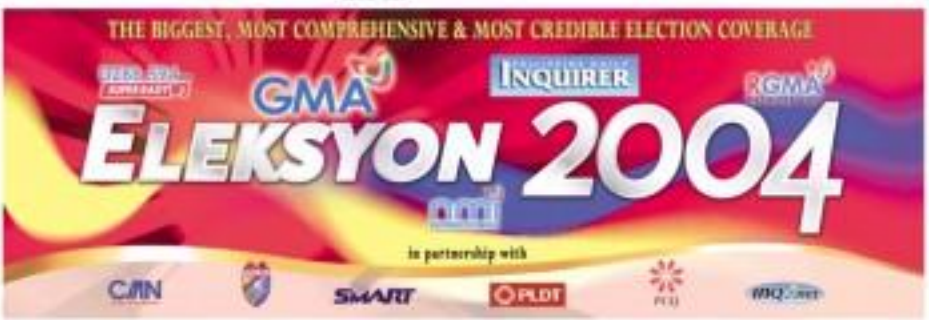
During the Davide impeachment, Sonny Osmeña again sided with the Pro impeachment block against a highly respected Cebuano/Bisaya Chief Justice Hilario Davide, Jr.

After the 1998 elections, he told the Cebuanos "Magpuasa kamo." You go hungry because Erap, my candidate, lost badly in the province. True to his word, Sonny Osmeña as chairperson of the Senate Finance Committee denied funding of development projects in Cebu, including cutting the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) shares of all Local Government Unit (LGU) in the Philippines by P5 Billion in 1999, P15 Billion in 2000 and P15 Billion in 2001.

He is now repackaging his tattered image. But his new image as "John O." cannot hide his real character as a treacherous and perverted politician.

John Henry Osmeña (alias Sonny, alias John O) does not deserve the support of the Cebuanos, Bisaya and the Filipino people.

CONCERNED CEBUANOS/BISAYA



Across the NATION

Bayan Muna campaign ends in 2 deaths

By Jaime Laude Jr. and Joyce Pangilinan
INQ Southern Luzon Bureau

NAGA CITY—The party-list group Bayan Muna ended its election-campaign yesterday in Camarines Sur with two of its members abducted and killed and 12 others missing since the harassment against them began on March 1, the day the New People's Army (NPA) captured two soldiers in an ambush in Hinabangan, Samar, news files.

But even as the group did so, its supporters among the working class, the marginalized, suffered another blow when its regional headquarters in Barangay Triangle, Legazpi City was burned by unidentified persons.

Bayan Muna held an indignation rally yesterday morning in the Plaza Quirino Idaloro in Naga City commemorating the continuing harassment against its party-list group that has now cost two lives.Dr. Manuel Dayuday, Ateneo de Naga University Political Science professor, said the harassment campaign against them.

Vice Remulanga, Central Bicol Commission, said the families of the victims of armed abduction of Bayan Muna members have filed complaints at the provincial prosecutor's office.

Remulanga said the criminal complaints charged four physical assaults in which of hatred corpus were directed against the officers and members of the Army's 42nd Infantry Battalion based in Malinao,Tiwi, Albay.

But Army spokesperson Col. Sarafil Santamaria have consistently denied the group's allegations and dared accused the NPA of perpetrating the abductions.

Bayan Muna topped the voting for party-list groups in the 2001 elections, with 27 percent or 71,333, out of a total of 262,130 votes in Camarines Sur. President Arroyo topped Bayan Muna's party-list group Ateneo Deca-Aquino obtained the second highest rank with 18 percent or 27,809.

Remulanga said they can field new members in all precincts in 11 of the 33 towns and new cities in Bicol's province provinces where Bayan Muna has chapters.

In Legazpi City, Wally Martella, head of Bayan Bicol and coordinator of Anakpawis in Bicol said at about 3 a.m., a staff member started gunfire and noticed that the office had been set on fire.

Policemen also found a bomb near the door of the office.

Martella said the perpetrators want the only point to be heard.

Their office suffered damages, according to Martella, and their campaign paraphernalia, like posters and streamers, were all burned into ashes.

Ecija gov says he's sticking with GMA candidacy

CABANATUAN CITY—Nueva Ecija Gov. Tomas Joson III has denied speculations that he is shifting support to presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. by keeping his name among only three announced candidates of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP).

"I have declared several times my support for Mr. Poe's candidacy," Joson said, referring to KNP vice-chairman Ramon Mitra, Juan Ponce Enrile and Miguel Zaldivar, who formed their ticket April 11.

But Joson, a former ally of ex-president Joseph Estrada, said his support remains with President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"I have stated before and people that I will support President Macapagal-Arroyo and I am standing by with my statement, 'Ako si Raul' (I'm Raul)," he said.

Joson said he was dead by a report in a political news magazine that said the more KNP leaders had mentioned him to support Poe. The report also said Joson's camp would soon release sample ballots carrying Poe's name.

"That's not true. I am not one who thinks big words," Joson, the acknowledged leader of the powerful Joson political family in Nueva Ecija, said.

He claimed that 13 of the 15 members of the provincial board, the 15 city and town mayors of Nueva Ecija and most of the 800 barangay captains in the province are supporting Mr. Macapagal.

Although Joson has massive grassroots support in his bid to make the Macapagal ticket in Nueva Ecija, his brother, Vice Gov. Ed, publicly backs Co supporting Poe.

Joson Jr. is also the KNP coordinator in Nueva Ecija.

Assistant Secretary Tomas Edu, Edwardo Hermoso "Edno" Joson is a candidate for re-election under presidential candidate Raul Roco's Aksyon ng Pag-Asa.

"Pabalato nay sa chairs (Joson Jr. or Edno) nag candidate ka ro ga amo dani sidto," he said, Jonathan Aragon, PDI Central Luzon Bureau

A GROUP RECENTLY in support for President Macapagal-Arroyo in a motorcade in Cabanatuan (left) and by Gov. Tomas Joson III in various provinces on Wednesday

INQUIRER Visayas

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The magnificent mangroves of Panay

By Ms. Dinah Labiste
Roxas City

UNLIKE the bamboo or coconut, the mangrove has yet to take its place as a "tree of life" in Philippine lore, despite being ubiquitous, useful and magnificent.

It comes given in place indicates popularity. Mangroves probably have as many as those around them as the other trees. The word *mangkokan* (mangrove) comes from "bakhaw," "lipata" and "tabao" or "mantabo." Mangroves are as shields of coastal communities because they do not bend, unlike bamboo, before the fury of 30 to 50 typhoons that visit the country every year. Many parts of the mangrove tree may be useful but their sturdiness and versatility could probably most come close to those of the mangroves. Mangrove products include wood, firewood, poles and charcoal. The leaves of nipa palm (*Nipa fruticans*) are made into thatches used in roofing and wall materials in the rural areas.

The mangrove also has numerous medicinal uses. It can relieve the common cough, toothache, asthma, anti-cancer, ulcer, diarrhea and dysentery, and can be used for birth control. The leaves, branches, fruit, seeds or roots of some species have been used as astringent, cosmetic or aphrodisiac.

Tuba, a popular drink made from sweetened sap, would have no kick and color without "bark," the powdered bark of a mangrove species (*Ceriops tagal*). Locally called "tungog," "tagal" or "agusa."

Mangrove leaves had been used as one of local residents during the months of Japanese occupation during World War II.

They were carried early seafarers to trading missions in Southeast Asia on boats called *balangay*, which was 15 meters long and 3 meters wide and could use 50 to 60 persons. The boats, dating back to 1300 AD, were constructed by joining the planks of "dungon" (*Heritiera littoralis*), the same mangrove wood that is being used today for house posts and rafters.

Remains of the vessels have been excavated in Aganan del Hoyo, then a major hunter and gold panning area in northern Mindoro.

Guidebook

If they are ranked ecologically and historically important, why aren't there parents and baby steps to mangroves?

Maybe poor, temperamental anyone may be inspired by reading the "Handbook of Mangroves in the Philippines-Panay," written by Jacqueline H. Primavera, Reinwardtiana B. Sadaba, Ma. Josefina M.L. Lebata and Jose P. Altamirano and published by the Aquaculture Department of the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (Seafdec) with the support of Unesco.

The handbook is a guide book for experts and lay persons who are interested in mangrove research but use the lack of even basic information about mangroves, especially on Panay Island, which has 11 of the 33 mangrove species in the country.

It presents detailed plant descriptions and available information on traditional uses, complete with impressive photographs of the habitat, leaves, flowers and fruits, roots and unique features. The information becomes alive and informative as it is easy and honest.

The authors took a year of field work to be able to write the handbook, from late 2002 through the 2003. Knowing hunting season, but their observations date back to the 1980s, especially for *Nipa fruticans*, a major scientist at Seafdec and expert on mangroves.

Together, they combed the coasts of Aklan, whose mangroves are highly diverse, to collect samples and retrieve stories about the species.

It was fun being researchers as well, how, for example, did they know that the *Avicennia officinalis*, locally known as "apiapi" or "bungalon" could make the blade leap? Or standing at dusk or at the drop of dawn under a grove of "pagapat" (*Sonneratia alba*) as their numerous white filaments fell in a magical experience?

Firing up the imagination

The handbook is also a field book for people from being a dash evaluation of scientific terms and explanation.

An example, the yellow giant horsey of "bungalon" or "bagabacan" (*Avicennia marina*) are described as giving a "gold on appearance in sunlight"; the bark is "mottled light green to brown and flaky"; and its parts, mangrovous or aerial roots are "pencil-shaped."

"Upang," "alipata" or "bantabon" (*Bruguiera sexangula*) blooms with male and female flowers distinguished during the reproductive period that is not really remote from human experience. Consider this line: "Male flowers in full bloom, which are longer than those of females, present a spectacular but short lived sight of numerous cottons hanging from their branches."

In coastal communities, mangroves mean life. Fish, prawns, shrimps and crabs are found in

PHOTOS of some mangrove species from the inside front cover of Handbook of Mangroves in the Philippines-Panay.

while Filamoora fell in a magical

Trivia

But readers who are not keen to savoured in exotic culinary pursuits, the handbook contains lots of trivia.

The royal throne of the king of Malaysia is made of "pagapat" (*Sonneratia caseolaris*) wood, which is known for its fine grain and deep color.

The original "nako" (car stick) used by Efren "Bata" Reyes, one of the Philippines' champion billiards players, was made of bakhaw wood, probably of the *Rhizophora apiculata* species.

Other valuable sections in the handbook identify the mangroves species in the Philippines and locate the rare species, the biggest and the tallest, and the last stands in Petot.

Towards the end, the reasons for the decline of mangroves, mainly attributed to ignorance, greed and government neglect, are discussed. Information on laws on mangroves protection, zoning and fishpond conversion are also mentioned.

According to the authors, "Legislation that conserves, protects, and rehabilitates Philippine mangroves has not been enough...as is their implementation that is almost or generally weak."

Success stories

But there's hope as shown by the three success stories on mangrove conservation in Iloilo City in Negros Occidental, Sta. Cruz, and the village of Bantayan in Infanta, Quezon; and stories of mangrove rehabilitation in Mayagay Lagoon in Surigao, Cupit and Barangay New Barauling in Iloilo, Aklan.

The mangrove plantation in New Barauling has been drawing visitors.

The handbook includes a plea for mangrove-friendly aquaculture, where farming is seaweeds, mussels, oysters, crabs and fish does not require mangrove clearing, contrary to common practice.

Available at the Seafdec/AQD for 1900, the publication is a must-buy for mangrove enthusiasts and anybody who wishes to learn about the world of mangroves.

W. Mindanao voters' list questioned

DAMBOHISA CITY—Just two days before the May 10 nationwide elections, the Commission on Elections (Comelec) in Western Mindanao revealed that the number of registered voters for this city is questionable.

Lawyer Antonio Magbanua, assistant regional election director for Western Mindanao and some areas in the autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, told the Inquirer that the "recent figures are under question."

"The acceptable normal increase should be 10 percent, but for the latest figures, it went up to 45 to 50 percent increase," Magbanua said.

In the 2001 elections, the number of registered voters in the city was 200,000. But as of March 15 this year, it has gone up to 300,715.

Despite the noted disparity in the figures, lawyer Salon Agalla Flores, Comelec director for Western Mindanao, said they will still use both the old and new lists of registered voters.

She said there were some minor problems in the listing, but gave assurances that there were later fixes taken to ensure that no one will be disenfranchised on Monday.

She said the problem lies in the Comelec central office where the main listing comes from.

Magbanua said voters whose names had been written more than once in the list will be placed under tight watch.

As the elections draw near, reports of violence shooting and feud aboound, although the Comelec has promised to conduct credible elections. Aide S. Alipalo, PIA Mindanao Bureau

Comelec division disqualifies Maganto

THE COMMISSION on Elections' First Division has disqualified retired police officer Romeo Maganto from the race for governor of Bataan for lack of residency.

But Maganto, a candidate of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino, said he appealed the Comelec decision and pending its resolution, he is still qualified to run for governor.

Maganto, who is running against re-electionist Governor Enrique Garcia de la Cruz of Lakas-CMD, is a native of South Cotabato. He married a public school teacher from Bataan town.

In other election news, a court in Vigan City has installed a new mayor on first term five days before the May 10 elections.

Judge Dominador Acapulado of the Vigan Regional Trial Court said Alfred Figueroa won in the 2001 mayoral contest over Mayor Flora Tadena.

"I am very thankful that finally justice has been served to me and my constituents," Figueroa told the Inquirer.

Figueroa is now running for any post in the town for the May 10 elections.

Tadena, of the Nationalist People's Coalition, is running for mayor against Vice Mayor Aldwin Quiwa-Cuhao-Bihag.

Tadena refused to yield his post, saying he has yet to receive official copies of the court's order.

Carmelo Flores, PIA Cordillera Lazaro Dodi and Lorenzo Ballos Jr., PIA Northern Luzon Bureau

Village chair deplores use of 3 'Gs' in Hagonoy

A VILLAGE chair of Bulacan province yesterday asked police to keep a close watch over the elections in the town because a candidate there has resorted to "guns, goons and gold."

Antonio Sergio, head of the League of Barangay Captains of Hagonoy and the candidate, an incumbent legislator, has also requested to vote-counting. The legislator's wife is running for vice mayor of the town.

Sergio also asked government goat to investigate an vice chair's lifestyle check on the legislator who owns a multimillion-peso mansion in Cubangot, Bulacan and 15 luxury vehicles.

"Our mayor, who does not even have a single bodyguard, advises us not to use of violence and vote of the province by his father, the late Secretary Blas Ople. I appeal to his political rival, who is related to the late and help us keep the elections clean and honest," Sergio said.

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MANIWALA KA!

'Hello...' and then the line went dead

Police named Ellongo's companion as Bernard Flores, 20, supposedly the second gunman, and Bobby Bonete, 29, who admitted carrying the grenade. Both Flores and Bonete are also from Mandaluyong.

Ellongo said the shooting took place before the bus reached the E-bank exit near Camp Crame in Quezon City.

Mistakenly Identified

Special Weapons and Tactics members involved in the operation said Ellongo and a SWAT officer who did not have gunfire at the time he spoke blocked the bus on Edsa minutes from Ayalas, an indication that Pastor and Gonzales were shot earlier.

Police were alerted to the holdup through the emergency hotline Patrol 117.

In cahoots

"Someone reported to Patrol 117 about armed men outside a bus. He gave the body numbers. Patrol 117 called us," said Superintendent Reynaldo Rivera, station duty officer of the Mandaluyong police.

Investigators believe that the bus driver, Union Arellano, 43, of Quezon City, conductor Mario Cadiz, 23, of Bataan, Bulacan, and employee Roy Hernaldo, 32, were in cahoots with the holdup men.

Ellongo confirmed this, and said his group saved a mobile phone to communicate with the drivers and the conductors.

But Cadiz was reluctant to do the cleaning involvement. "I don't know them. I have never seen them before."

He added that it was the first time he had a holdup involved on the bus's watch.

An intelligence officer said the bayaran duo Arellano and Cadiz "helped" hide the robbery by cleaning the canteen on the bus who drove and running off the lights.

Cadiz countered that the pair men had ordered him and Arellano to do so. "They were armed. Sir couldn't disobey them," he said.

Police said the killer-dude parties who were taken to the police station in handcuffs as a precautionary measure, were released after their statements were taken.

THE AFTERMATH of a nightmare: An empty Sanitarn Cityhess bus, a driver still in shock and a dead passenger

Danding loses SMC case; Sandigan awards 27% to gov't

No change in SMC structure

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

AMANTE said the Sandiganbayan decision on the ownership of the disputed San Miguel Corp. shares would boost the government's coffers by P1.5 billion.

They also did not see any change in the corporate structure of SMC.

Analysts said the next big question on investors' minds is if the stocks of the decision awarding to the government the disputed 27 percent share of disputed stock. "Who will buy the [SMC] shares from the government?"

They said the decision would give the government some k-

[illegible] Cojuangco was connected to the elections. Cojuangco is believed to be supporting opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr.

In trust for coco farmers

In a 66-page decision, the Sandiganbayan said the shares originally held by 14 companies owned by Cojuangco Jr. were declared owned by the government in trust for all the coconut farmers and ordered recovered to the government.

But the court has yet to decide whether the CDB shares represent 27 percent or 31.5 percent of the company's outstanding capital stock. The decision-by majority decision was signed by the justices over the phone.

The PCGG, the agency tasked with the recovery of ill-gotten coconut funds, acquainted the 27 percent CDB shares, along with the 27 percent held by Cojuangco in 1986, when Cojuangco was the chairman of the agency's 15-man board, with the help of shareholders supportive of him, including Cojuangco's then brother-in-law Eduardo Cojuangco Jr., who held a 15 percent stake in SMC.

Jubilant

Small coconut farmers group were "jubilant" about the ruling, said Philippine Peanut Institute director-director-farmer-farmers Bernardo.

He said the ruling "effectively settles" the question of ownership of the coco levy assets.

"The small coconut farmers are confident that this ruling would definitely set a precedent in settling the dispute over the ownership of the [illegible] coco levy funds.

The ruling was penned by Sandiganbayan First Division Presiding Justice Gregory Ong. Associate Justices Godardo Jacinto and Edilberto Pilapil.

In its ruling, the court held that the government, under the Philippine Coconut Finance Bank in the CDB companies using the coconut levy funds indicated the purpose for which the levy was originally meant.

"We hold that the CDB oil mills, the 14 holding companies, and the CDB block of SMC shares belong to the government," it said.

"The CDB companies having been acquired with public funds, the 14 CDB-owned holding companies and all their assets, including the CDB block of the SMC shares, being public in nature, belong to the government," the ant-graft court said.

Cojuangco also claims on indirect stake in the sequestered 27 percent block of shares which are classified as the "Ballesteros et al" shares, claimed by the so-called "one million coconut farmers."

The Sandiganbayan ruled that the "clear burden" for loss of the shares of stock of the CDB companies" was vested with cocoinvestment privileges.

"The [accompanying equity requirement of the 14 holding companies, which were allegedly used as to for the acquisition of the SMC shares, being wholly-owned by the CDB companies, likewise form part of the coconut levy funds, and thus belong to the government or vested by the ultimate beneficiaries thereof, which are all coconut farmers," the court said.

Burden of proof

The Sandiganbayan said the burden lawyers that they had the burden of proof "to show how shares acquired through the use of public funds have improperly been transferred to private persons."

Before issuing its decision, the court denied a plea from SMC lawyers to have a full trial on the disputed 25.45 million shares which the company supposedly purchased from the CDB companies directly before the government sequestered the 27 percent block of shares in 1986.

The SMC claims that the 25.45 million shares are part of the 27 percent being claimed by the government.

The issues of the interest claimed by SMC does not amount to intervention under the Rules of Court," the court said in a 27-page separate resolution issued hours before the court issued the partial preliminary judgment on the 27 percent block of shares.

SMC lawyers have attempted to block the issuance of the preliminary judgment by seeking to intervene in the case involving some of the shares bought from the 14 CDF firms.

The 25.45 million shares are now being held in the Diamond Treasury and are not earning any dividends. The PCGG is seeking their release and the payment of accruing dividends.

Still pending

Still pending is a separate motion for summary judgment filed by the PCGG covering the 20 percent of SMC shares held by Cojuangco and 29 firms that he owns.

The PCGG motion has not been submitted for resolution because of a motion for reconsideration that the First Division has yet to rule on, including a government appeal of the court's earlier ruling which lifted the Centre on the disputed 26 percent block of shares pending the outcome of Cojuangco's suit the shares and regain control of the company.

Roco 'miting' in Naga; FPJ in Makati; none for GMA

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Excellence Prestige Quality

Arroyo, Mission ng Pag-Asa standard bearer Raul Roco swarmed to his party's stronghold in Naga to launch his campaign for the presidency.

"I'm very happy to be here," Roco said shortly after he arrived. "I have always hoped and needed my political fight in the city of Naga."

Amidst a heavy atmosphere, he confronted the administration against declining to run's ahead of the May 10 polls, saying it should not disregard the votes of the youth.

Youth vote to make difference

"They forget that 60 percent of the voters are from people below 44," Roco said. "That is on the basis of an 80 percent turnout, which is very high, which is something like 23 million."

"Sixty-six percent of that is like 23 million voters. If 50 percent go to Roco from the youth vote alone that will be 11.5 million, and the youth will make the change in the Philippines."

Supporters, who gathered at the airport at noon at 11:30 a.m., cheered and chanted as the four-engine Beechcraft carrying Roco, his wife Loida and an aide hovered at about 1 p.m. over the airport in Pili, seven (7) Camarines Sur.

At the Avenida de Oro, Jr. of the Bonifacio ng Bagkalaunang Filipino plans to hold his own "Miting de Avance" today in De Mahoh between the town—in the very heart of the country's big business, which questions his ill-health concerns.

Terrorist threat

Pre security measure, President Macapagal-Arroyo will not hold any miting de avance. Instead, she plans to appear in the final rallies of the administration's local candidates in Metro Manila and cities by proxies.

Speaker Jose de Venecia told the Inquirer last Thursday that terrorist threats to carry out bombings before the election had led the administration party to rethink its plans for a grand rally.

Rally, thing of the past

For some, the tradition of holding a Miting de Avance to cap an election campaign may soon be a thing of the past.

Senate President Franklin Drilon yesterday said this year's campaign had shown that it was better to splurge on buying media time and media space than spending money to mount political rallies.

"The utility value to me [of political rallies] is zero. It was better [than it was] 10 years ago, because there was power in media [as] get you more votes," Drilon said.

"The return on your expense in your media campaign is much higher than the precious space for rallies."

Roco, now ordensated at the airport by his brother—Comelec lost Rep. Glen Rose and Secunder—children Ben, Pompet and Nestor, and Naga City Mayor Jesse Robredo, a longtime friend.

Roco served as congressman in Camarines Sur before he ran for senator and won in 1992.

Sea of supporters

From the airport, Roco ascended to the town proper of Pili en route to Naga City accompanied by more than 100 vehicles carrying supporters clad in red and yellow.

The motorcade stopped several times to allow Roco to shake hands with his constituents, who thanked his name and flashed the Alyansa hand sign.

Residents wound him like a showing star to women and children went out to greet him, some grabbing his hands and others shouting "Tatay Pogi, Roco!"

At the rally, one of the country's top bands, Sandy Sandoy, serenaded him with the popular ballad "Kumbinse."

Besides featuring many Bicolano singers and his own seven-year-old children could not make it to the rally. They had gone to their own hometown to lay support for Mission.

'Miting de kumbinse'

But they had a taped "miting de kumbinse" to be aired today at 8:30 a.m. on DZRH, 9:00 a.m. on ABS-CBN 2, at 11 a.m. on ABC, news channel, and on all radio stations nationwide.

Roco held a brief meeting at Naga's Basilica Minor to pray before Our Lady of Peñafrancia. Before he and his entourage proceeded to Naga's Plaza Quezon for the Miting de Avance.

The former senator's entire in opinion surveys had fallen sharply after he suspended his campaign last month to undergo treatment in the United States for the recurrence of prostate cancer.

Roco's return created a huge traffic jam as it made its way through a sea of supporters and bystanders, who jammed the road circling the plaza.

Speaking against a backdrop of a giant picture of him painted over the former's residence, Roco said that he had already gained enough volunteers in his first weekend back to run.

With boots said, "I think yes you will win."

All set for 3rd MY Games

THEY'RE OFF! Entries in the Century Sun Mig Light Adventure Race answer the starting gun during the first leg of the 2004 series held in Boracay recently. Team Right-Pride topped this 65km category, while Team Lure Lure leading all comers in the Fun category. The second leg of the series is slated in August in Manila.

THE FINEST and presenting 15-sector athletes from the Big City will again gesture as the Pasig Memorial Sports Complex for epic-level competition in the 3rd Manila Youth Games (MY Games) slated May 23-30.

Arnold "Ali" Asinas, chief of the organizing Manila Sports Council (Masco), said yesterday everything is in readiness for the games where 6,000 children athletes are expected to vie in 14 sports.

He said a colorful opening ceremony highlighted by a cheering competition among the city's college and university squads, will usher in the weeklong multi-event competition which has "Manila Sports, Good for" as its theme.

"We envision the 3rd MY Games to kick off another chapter in Manila's sports history," said Asinas, also a Manila Mayor Lito Atienza, "We aim to stir the consciousness of the elders of the City of Manila to involve their children in sports and physical fitness."

Practically all 897 barangays and 220 schools in the country's premier city will be represented in the games. The events on cap include athletics, badminton, baseball, chess, dancesports, football, gymnastics, softball, swimming, table tennis, team tennis, taekwondo, volleyball and wushu.

"Through the MY Games, we hope to contribute to the national sports development agenda while providing Manila's youth a wholesome, exuberant event that will help instill their awareness of society," said Mayor Atienza.

The 3rd MY Games is a vital part of the city's Bataan-ng Maynilad program. Manila's administration of the 2001 Philippine National Youth Games Batang Pinoy in Bataan City had also inspired city hall to start its own sports development programs for children athletes.

Pacquiao urged to prove 'Filipinos at par with world's best'

A VICTORY by Manny Pacquiao in his biggest fight to date Saturday (Sunday morning in Manila) at Las Vegas will emphasize the fact that "Filipinos, whatever their skills, are at par with the world's best."

ABP sensational candidate Justin Madrid said this yesterday as she urged Pacquiao to do his best and win the title fight against Mexican IBF/WBA champion Juan Manuel Marquez.

"My prayers go with Manny and I wish him the best. This is another rare opportunity for a Filipino athlete to shine in the international arena," said Madrigal, who espouses youth and sports development in her areas of governance.

A native of Gen. Santos City, Pacquiao is a favorite son with sports advisor Kenny Cunanan, with over a livelihood and skills training program for street children in Region 12 where he ran into home.

War brewing . . .

Pacquiao, A11

the press conference for the world championship dubbed "Boxing and Fine Arts."

He also thanked his supporters, his country, men and GMA for "bringing the championship and History Pacquiao to the world."

In his turn, to talk, Marquez whispered and said he wouldn't rather let his "fists do the talking on Saturday."

Trash talking, a routine event in big world boxing championships, did not take place as the main contending parties displayed manual respect for each other.

"Pacquiao presents a lot of difficulties for us," pronounced Nacho Beristain, Marquez's trainer who has made a total of 13 world boxing champions. "He's strong, a very special southpaw, the most dangerous fighter (southpaw) in the world."

Beristain also hinted what they planned to do against Pacquiao.

Claiming his fighter to be more fundamentally sound, Beristain said Marquez would "break Pacquiao's guard" and pretend.

Pacquiao, for his part, said they've perfected a plan to beat Marquez, but he again refused to divulge details.

"Just like in the fight against Barrera, our plan against Marquez is a secret," Pacquiao told a swarm of foreign journalists, many of whom had to settle for his chicken-breasted sidekicks.

In attendance during the presscon at the south wing of the MGM Grand arena were Bob Arum and Murad Muhammad, friends since their days with Muhammad Ali, who have conspired to put up the lucrative championship, which they claimed "another excellent chapter in the fight of the year."

Promoters formally announced the names of the judges, Raul Clemente (Nevada), Guy Anton (Canada), and John Stewart (New Jersey), who has replaced Clark Imchen Ho.

The referee will be Joe Cortez, who was the third man when Pacquiao stopped unbeaten Lehlo Ledwaba of South Africa to retain the IBF super bantamweight crown in 2003 at the Grand arena here, site of Saturday's championship.

The sports book display boys indicated that a $270 bet for Pacquiao would pay $300, while $1,000 for Marquez will net $758.

Marquez has been given only a 20 per cent (4/5) chance of stopping Pacquiao.

Pacquiao, who dropped the scales at 125 lbs., one under the featherweight limit, after his final workout Wednesday, bettered up Thursday morning, had dinner, and was expected to "retire through the wades in the wright room Friday.

Interest in the championship has surpassed expectations and promoters said they look forward to a sell out at the capacity 15,000 Grand Arena.

It's a huge . . .

Pacquiao, A11

celebrate the one-sided wars.

This or late, Pacquiao is scheduled to be honored this "Manny Pacquiao Day" to be rendered by the Filipino-American community in Southern Nevada on Sunday.

Some Sison and City Council liaison Jan Rayan said they have invited the city mayor of Las Vegas, Oscar Goodman, to present the key to the city to the guest in consideration of the Bato Boxing Restaurant of the MGM Grand.

Meanwhile, the championship fight in Sunday was so hot and huge it knocked out the website (mannypacquiao.ph) dedicated to Manny Pacquiao here.

By 9 p.m. Thursday, nobody could access the web site due to successful hits overload.

"Due to tremendous response, this server seems to a need," the company monitor announced.

The website, created by Chris Swoyer of Irvine, was out of commission for several hours.

No $1 million for Pacquiao

Las Vegas, Nevada.—Contrary to popular belief, Manny Pacquiao is not yet a million dollar champion.

Pacquiao is not getting the $1 million purse until he announces for the third time after defeating opponent Juan Manuel Marquez after all.

This was learned from promoter Bob Arum of Top Rank who divulged that the said $1 million purse was actually a combined payment for the two main event bouts, Pacquiao and Juan Manuel Marquez.

Arum told the Las Vegas Sun that Pacquiao and Marquez would receive an even $500,000 each for the Saturday main event.

It was earlier advertised in Manila that Bobby Isaacs had been negotiating for a $1 million purse for Pacquiao.

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2000 Trams Street, Pasay City, Metro Manila

Third Prize: **Ms. JOYCE SARMIENTO**
Block 4 Lot 18 Halal Street, Pamplona City, MM

Consolation Prize: **Ms. ROSEMIE GARCIA**
#70 Anahaw Street, San Agustin, Malabon, MM

Consolation Prize: **Ms. CHONA FORTANEZ**
733 Dona Street, Brgy Punta, MTAM, Quezon City

NORTHERN LUZON 2

First Prize: **Mr. SHIRLY ERRICO**
Pangatia, Tuguegarao City

Second Prize: **Ms. EMMA BUKSAY**
Sta C-Lua II Bagabag, North Bunayang, Maramba, Bulacan

Third Prize: **Mr. ORLAND TORRES**
Dumlao, Bagumbayan, Batangas City, Batangas

Consolation Prize: **Ms. PRISCILLA ABO**
050 Hilubon, San Jose del Monte, Bulacan

Consolation Prize: **Mr. REESTITO ALLAPITA**
San Pedro, Tumauini, Isabela

NORTHERN LUZON 1

First Prize: **Ms. LULU BORIANO**
#3 Cuma Bldg., 7 Stahl St., Lingayen, Pangasinan

Second Prize: **Mr. STEVE BATENG**
Km. 9 San Fabian, Baguio City

Third Prize: **Ms. FLORDELIZA BALAGAR**
Alberdeb, Sta. Barbara, Pangasinan

Consolation Prize: **Mr. PAUL DE LEON**
99 Bonifacio St. San Carlos City, Pangasinan

Consolation Prize: **Mr. CELY RAMOS**
Baaon, Burgos 2516 Ilocos Norte

SOUTHERN LUZON

First Prize: **Ms. SYLVIA TABELES**
Blk 11 Lot 65, Brgy. San Andres II, 2,000 D.C.

Second Prize: **Ms. AMOR INGELES**
Ibacor, Gumaca, Albay

Third Prize: **Ms. MARIE GRACE IDANIETA**
334 San Vicente, Bohol, Laguna

Consolation Prize: **Mr. NOEL ROJON**
E. Asuncion Street, Tuburan, Ilihang, Cavite

Consolation Prize: **Ms. ANNA VENA ABEL**
7 Balibaguhan, Malolos, Batangas

VISAYAS

First Prize: **Ms. MERARI TAVERA**
108 I-H, Cortes St., Mandaue, Mandaue City

Second Prize: **Ms. RAQUEL SAGNIGA**
Cogon, Poblacion, Lilo-an, Cebu City

Third Prize: **Ms. MABEL FRANCISCO**
Kinamlutan, Alaminos City

Consolation Prize: **Mr. ASUROS CABELLO**
San Agustin Heights, Tisa, Labangon, Cebu City

Consolation Prize: **Mr. MARLON LAMPAYAN**
Barangay Tugas, Baliu, Leyte

MINDANAO

First Prize: **Mr. JIMBOY ALONTAGA**
Santos St., Poblacion, South Cotabato

Second Prize: **SHAIB ALONTO**
Islamic Center, Tacurong City

Third Prize: **Ms. MARIE BLANCADA**
Tinuan, Zamboanga City

Consolation Prize: **Ms. MARY ANN PICARA**
San Carlos, Tuburan, Zamboanga del Sur

Consolation Prize: **Ms. LOIDA ABABARAS**
Blk 28 Lot 17 Gulf View, Executive Homes, Brgy. Ajalpalo, Davao City

Per DTI NCR Permit No. 6210 Series of 2004

DELIVERY man unloads election materials at the Cordillera Comelec regional office. It will take two more days to reach far-flung villages in the Cordilleras. EDITH BONDAD-AMATONG

Bishops bare 'forced …

Front page 1

presence of their superiors and under threats of reprisal if they did not write the names of certain candidates or sign the ballots.

The coalition, however, did not identify the candidates that would supposedly benefit from the forced election-rigging, the disenfranchised ballots or the manipulated results.

To prevent bigger fraud

The officers allegedly said "the damage was already done" in some areas, meaning the number of votes for certain candidates had already been determined. The cheating will allegedly be done through disappearing or misplaced ballot boxes.

"We believe that there is already fraud being done, but the fraud that will be done to bigger … more systematic, more massive, more intense … And that is what we want to prevent," said Operation Hatak's Emie Ordoñez, deputy director of the coalition composed of 22 member organizations, said at a press briefing.

Ordoñez, a former media worker, secretary and now chair of the country's biggest organization of farmers and fisherfolk, the Alyansa Agrikultura, said a group of relatives met with the archbishops last week after the coalition was formed. The priests, carrying copies of the alleged instructions, said the officers' knowledge of the military officers' allegations.

"That came to our attention through the media," he said. "We, the bishops, are not carrying out those who would be in opposition to some … so we can validate and verify the allegations."

Garcia said the military was "politically neutral."

"What the AFP's bias is to do is to make sure that there is a level playing field for those who are competing in the elections. The impartial thing that the [AFP] must do is protect the people's will," he added.

Is it the administration?

According to the coalition for ROPE, those behind the planned cheating have developed a system to facilitate the fraud in at least 10 rural areas such as the Cabalarzon provinces (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon), Aurora, Central Visayas and Southern Mindanao based on the strength and weaknesses of certain candidates.

The plan also allegedly called for mind-conditioning and lining. Supposedly while the election results are being physically brought to the municipalities, provinces and regions, the encoded data will be manipulated and transmitted via the more disapproved Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) so that these will tally with the rumpered winners as well.

"Is the Comelec (Commission on Elections) administration? Is the military administration?" was the coalition director Antonio de Las Nieves said when asked if it was the administration that was orchestrating the alleged fraud plan.

But he also noted that the administration was making massive accusations of fraud against the opposition, and cited the remarks of National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales in an interview Thursday.

Overprinting

De las Nieves said the coalition had received reports that the Comelec allowed the overprinting of two million ballots that could not be accounted for and that "at least one top official of the Comelec" recently distributed overprinted blank certificates of canvass (COCs) and certificates of election returns (COERs) "to certain parliamentary interests with fraudulent intent."

De las Nieves, who is also previous director of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, to notify the 81 bishops so that all whistleblowers from the elections could be isolated by Sunday.

"I hope the parish priests would have the courage to do this because this is not a joke. This is serious, if we want a future for our country and our children," Feliciano said.

2,702 parishes

Operation Hatak will recruit its poll watchers from 2,702 parishes nationwide for the 234,219 precincts.

The coalition said the parishes would likely get more than what was needed for the operation.

"If we do not get involved, [the military officers] will be forced to participate. What will they tell their boss? Those who did not participate, you already have committed in one way or another," Ordoñez said.

He quoted the officers as saying, "We do not want to do this… but we have been told that if we do not participate, we will be threatened. In addition, we are asked to do something we do not want to do.

"Please help us so that we can tell our superiors, 'We are sorry, we cannot do it because we have people who are watching us.' If you do not help us, we have no choice but to follow the orders of our superiors."

Ordoñez said he had seven "a lot" of friend. "But this one is serious, timbre … All the PNCBP (Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting) and Namfrel (National Movement for Free Elections), and then will tell you that this is the worst election ever," he said.

Has Gringo dumped FPJ? Sample ballots show Guardians back GMA

Front page 1

ter and more circle of the administration, was characterized actually true when sought for an explanation.

At first, he said the PCSO was circulating several kinds of sample ballots.

Then he said the sample ballots endorsing Mr Macapagal could have been printed by "friends who have adopted him."

"It could be an act of goodwill for the Guardians and for not [for] me," Hinamon said, adding that such goodwill was the "result of the long years of our engagement in that murky world of politics."

The PCSO source said at least 1,000,000 the sample ballots had been printed and that more was being printed yesterday.

The source declined to provide a copy of Hinamon's letter to the PCSO, a bureaucracy of mostly active soldiers and policemen, or retired military and police personnel and sympathetic civilians.

Still with FPJ

Hinamon clarified that he was still the security chief of Roi and the listed guardian of the ballots for the KNP during the voting and counting.

But he said that "our private pal concern is to protect the piety of all candidates, whether they are administration or opposition."

Hinamon said that he wanted to see a majority president emerging from the elections, as only a president with a clear mandate could have the "moral authority to convene a government of national unity."

The day before he signed the May 3 covenant with Arroyo, the "Buencamino memo" about the President and the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats, whom he closely supported in power, said on May 10, would form a "government of national unity" after the polls.

Power sharing

He said this unity government would harness "the best and brightest" from the opposition under the principle of "power sharing."

Senior deputy presidential chief of staff Ilona Bautista, one of the Malacañang officials who cooperated with Hinamon and numerous junior officers during the failed coup of July 2003, said the covenant was part of the administration's secret dirty-tricks program.

Hinamon is facing rebellion charges for his alleged role in that failed coup.

Others said Hinamon is aiming to become a party for congressman, "so he can be part of the government of national unity and then a part of the reconciliation program of the President".

The Guardians' senatorial bets from the 8-4 set formed trade secretary Manuel "Boy" Roxas, reelectionist senators Rodolfo Biazon, Robert Barbers and Gilbert Lacson, former defense secretary Orlando Mercado, and Retired Brigadier General Ola Rocca, General Virtuoso and brothers Mendozas based on the strength and weaknesses of various candidates.

The plan also allegedly called for mind-conditioning and lining. Supposedly while the election results are being physically brought to the municipalities, provinces

Is it the administration?

According to the coalition for ROPE, those behind the planned cheating have developed a system to facilitate the fraud in at least 10 rural areas such as the Calabarzon provinces (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal and Quezon), Aurora, Central Visayas and Southern Mindanao based on the strength and weaknesses of various candidates.

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Religious blocs more potent now than Catholic Church

Front page 1

The educational and research organization based in Honolulu, Hawaii, was established by the CIA Congress in 1960 to promote better ties between the US and the Asia-Pacific region through study training and research.

Minor failure

A May 4 report quoting East-West Center senior fellow Michel Oksenberg said charismatic groups "never figured into significantly in elections before. Mr Macapagal has been touching every backward to these groups and they will help her win."

The President recently received the backing of the bloc-voting Iglesia Ni Cristo, the Philippine Independent Catholic Church and the El Shaddai Movement which the Center said could be her "swing vote" in the tightly contested presidential elections.

The report also noted that another charismatic group, the Jesus is Lord Movement, had been making moves on the success campaign with its leader, Eddie Villanueva, revealing a determined bid for the presidency.

Waning influence

"These upbeat religious organizations have emerged as serious political force that the Catholic Church whose influence has waned visibly since 1986 when it led the richer people power revolution," Oksenberg said.

He blamed this on "the generally disorganized" — among Filipino Catholics who comprise 83 percent of the population, and the end to its leadership. "No one has replaced the outspoken leadership of Cardinal Jaime Sin," said Oksenberg, a former director of the Committee on Scholarship, Scientific and Cultural Organization and chair of the Presidential Commission on Educational Reform in the Philippines.

Three groups have flourished largely because the Catholic Church had fallen short in meeting the modern spiritual needs of its flock, Oksenberg added. "Although Filipinos still attend Mass, they have a thirst for religious life in some being filled by traditional religious organizations. Prayer groups that were little-packets have and those have become mass movements," he said.

No significant difference

While the "power bloc's" might be changing, the East-West Center believes the next presidential election was unlikely to change the Philippine political system that has created great wealth for a few and poverty for many.

In an earlier report, East-West Center Philippine specialist Jerry Petit said that it was the poor who suffer in the end when no sound leadership is lacking. "The outcome of the election is unlikely to make a significant difference for the poor majority," he said.

Congressman from the ruling Lakas party on the other hand, said endorsements by the Iglesia ni Cristo, El Shaddai and the Aglipayan Church of the Dreadnet's candidacy would not her victory on May 10.

Majority win?

Bayan Muna Rep. Ed de Guzman and Bicolo Rep. Satur Ocampo said the elections would be a chance to prove the bloc-voting power of these religious groups as shown in the 1998 elections when their endorsements helped in the victory of former President Joseph Estrada.

De Guzman said the support of the religious groups would be instrumental in achieving the administration coalition's goal of a majority vote for Sen. The INC is estimated to have two million votes, and the El Shaddai movement has four.

"These endorsements were instrumental in getting the President a vote of confidence," said Satur, adding that the Macapagal-Arroyo tandem would be a "shoe-in" if the INC and El Shaddai vote en bloc.

Ping cries 'fraud'

By Norman Bordadora

CATBALOGAN, Samar—Sen. Panfilo Lacson yesterday cried election fraud and threatened to hold a "people's power" rally if election results in the coming May 10 elections are not reflective of the will of the people.

"I can't imagine the Philippine National Police has stooped to such depravity and so low that [as it] [has] to actively participate in the [cheating] of their [operations] in Metro Manila," he said.

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Gloria not impressed …

Front page 1

speculated that the Macapagal would never mention or even refer to Ping as a Filipino.

"That's a very unnecessary, thank you," Imbido said. "I don't want to speculate on the motive."

He added that another rally was no longer necessary. "In the past three years, the President has sufficiently expressed her plans of governance and has clearly shown her style of leadership," he said.

Imbido made the statement when asked by reporters for Macapagal's reaction to the biggest turnout for any presidential candidate. The crowd was unofficially seen by the Inquirer to reach in the recent surveys, but by common tally reader Villanueva, leader of the Jesus is Lord Church, who is running for president on a platform of fast food renewal.

Senate President Franklin Drilon agreed. "Yes, by the number of people," he said of Villanueva. But it is not enough to win the election."

Drilon said surveys have shown that Villanueva has about five percent support for his presidential bid which translates to about 3.5 million to two million votes. He reiterated his prediction that the Macapagal would win a total of five to 10 percent or between 1.5 million and three million votes over her closest rival, Fernando Poe Jr.

NCR votes

The latest Pulse Asia survey showed that the President has widened her lead over Poe by 8.6 percent. "That should please her as about two-thirds votes ahead of Poe," he said.

Equally unfazed by the huge crowd turnout in Villanueva's mining de avance, Senator Magsaysay Leader Francis Escudero said he would rely more on the accuracy of surveys than the "number-getting effect of crowds."

Thursday night's sizzling de avance showed that Villanueva's group could mobilize a huge number of individuals.

"But a huge crowd and a huge number of individuals do not necessarily result in a national vote," he said. "It could be a National Capital Region vote again[st] but we're talking of the entire country here."

BUSINESS

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Price hikes loom as oil prices soar

By Abigail L. Ho

THE DEPARTMENT of Energy expressed "serious concerns" over the escalating prices of oil in the world market, with the benchmark Dubai crude hitting a 13-year high Thursday.

Dubai crude, the benchmark used by local oil refiners in pricing their products, soared to $64.55 a barrel on May 4, almost 47 percent higher than a year ago.

In April, Dubai crude averaged $61.05 a barrel, up 41.25 cents from the $60.10 average price in March.

The high Dubai crude price was attributed to the continued threats to the loss of infrastructure, a bounding economy like China that requires more energy, and fear of recession in the United States.

Crude prices in the United States also hit a 13-year high at $75 a barrel. Per unit of the gasoline weeks, prices have increased at the $2.97-per-barrel level due to fears of a supply shortfall.

Wholesale gasoline prices in the United States likewise soared to a 28-year high, also attributed to apprehensions that supply might not be able to meet peak summer demand there.

Considering these factors, Consumer and Oil Price Watch chair Raul Concepcion warned of another oil price increase the

PAGE B2

Forex reserves hit $16.4B in April

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE COUNTRY'S gross international reserves (GIR) rose to $16.42 billion as of end-April from $16.34 billion a month ago mainly due to inflows from both public sector borrowings.

The improved foreign reserves position was expected to result in a surplus in the country's balance of payments (BOP) for the second consecutive month in April after a $443-million surplus in March.

"At this level, GIR was adequate to cover 4.5 months of imports of goods and payments of services and income," BSP Deputy Governor Alberto Reyes said yesterday.

"Alternatively, using other measures of reserve coverage, current level was equivalent to 2.6 times the country's short-term debt based on original maturity and 1.3 times based on residual maturity," Reyes said.

Short-term debt based on residual maturity refers to outstanding short-term external debt on original maturity plus principal payments on medium- and long-term loans of the public and private sectors falling due within the next 12 months.

The increase in April reserves was due mainly to inflow despite by the national government of the proceeds from its term-coupon treasury bond issue with 20-medium- and long-term borrowings of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

During the month, the BSP raised $640 million from a syndicate of foreign banks to come to its maturing refinancing requirements for the year.

Net portfolio inflows during the first three

PAGE B2

Stocks up as investors see GMA win

STOCKS hovered higher yesterday, the last trading day before national elections on Monday, with investors hoping President Macapagal-Arroyo could easily form a majority, analysts said.

Telecom shares, led by market leader PLDT and second-ranked Globe Telecom, climbed after strong quarterly earnings this week and improved outlook.

Analysts said reports that anti-Gloria groups had formed an electoral coalition to campaign against political stalwarts and results in the Philippine Peso to appreciate.

"President Macapagal would remain in the league but right now, given the announcements and survey results," said Antonio Basilio, research head at Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.

"If the data are, there will be conditions as far as government programs are concerned. If economic structure, democratic structure, personal, is a Macapagal victory will take that out."

Basilio speculated anti-Gloria president Joseph Estrada will elect members of Congress and 17,000 other officials at all levels of government on Monday.

The major index ended three points or 0.1% gain and higher at 1,554.06 points. Turnover is up 1.79 percent to 367,862 shares.

Foreign dropped to 1,790.28 million from

Thursday's P858.44 million, as gainers beat losers 27 to 17.

Reuters

RAILWAY REHAB

RP taps Korea for $50-M loan

By Clarissa S. Rodeo

TOKYO SUPPORT has tapped South Korea's state-owned lending institution for a $50-million long-term loan that would cover part of the P3.6-billion rehabilitation of the southern passenger railway line of the Philippine National Railway system.

Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza said the Republic of Korea's Economic Development Cooperation Fund and its Export-Import Bank have agreed to provide low-interest funding to help finance the first-phase upgrade of PNR's South Manila line.

The 32-kilometer South Manila line stretches from Solanos Road in Caloocan to Alabang.

Last month, marketing executive Carlos Moreno was hit by a PNR train on his way to Alabang. Moreno was at Nazy's reaction along the railroad tracks near the East Service Road in Western Bicutan, Taguig, when the train approached. Several other fatal accidents took place along the PNR's south line.

Mendoza said the first phase of the project would include the fencing of station premises and improve signaling and communications facilities. He said the improvements should reduce the accidents on the railway tracks.

PNR general manager Jose Ma. Ferrer Jr. said the rehabilitation of the Caloocan-Alabang line would speed up the travel time to 30 minutes for the whole stretch.

After the upgrade, the South Manila line could carry roughly 187,000 passengers a day using 21 units of new diesel railcars to be acquired under the project. It would have 16 improved stations.

Korea's development fund would provide a $35-million loan while its Export-Import Bank would account for $15-M1 million to complete the foreign component of the project financing.

The government would provide the local component equivalent to P34.26 million to cover rights-of-way plus some infrastructure for the railway line.

Mendoza said the Korean multilateral institutions would charge an interest of 2.5 percent a year on the 30-year loan. He added that the national government would provide a sovereign guarantee on the loan.

Ferrer said the first-phase upgrade would also cover improvement of the railway tracks, strengthening of the old PNR bridges, double-tracking of the Buras-Alabang line, improvements of stations, depots and maintenance equipment.

Eventually, the rehabilitated South Manila railway would be interconnected to the Northrail, the LRT Line and MRT-3 as part of the integration of Manila's railway system.

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo (at the second row) Commex Contact Center Inc. (C-Cubed), the first and only ISO 9001:2000-certified call center in the country. Ms Macapagal's visit is C-Cubed signifies government's interest in the booming call center industry. Her presence in C-Cubed was part of her visit to Eastwood City Cyberpark in Libis, Quezon City. Photo shows Ms Macapagal approaching work stations to chat with the company's customer service representatives (CSRs) during the facility tour. Looking on are (from left) Magsaysay Corp. president Andrew Tan and Trade Secretary Cesar V. Purisima.

Price hikes loom as oil prices soar

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Ayala IT company expands in Europe

By Doris C. Dumlao

BASIX Inc., a unit of the Ayala Integrated Microelectronics Inc., has tied up with Germany-based MBV Elektronik Service GmbH as a wireless solutions partner in Central and Eastern Europe.

MBV, the fifth biggest revenue earner among the subsidiaries of Ayala Corp., yesterday said MBV Elektronik would market Basix's wireless communication original design manufacturing (ODM) products.

Basix president and CEO Arthur Tan said: "We expect MBV's extensive marketing experience, technical expertise and commitment support to strengthen our position with major European electronics manufacturers."

MBV Elektronik is a Germany-based distributor and stocking representative for electronic wafer components. It offers procurement of electronic components and logistics services to original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) as well as electronic manufacturing service companies in Central and Eastern Europe.

The German firm will then become an authorized distributor of Basix's line of wireless connectivity ODM products, including wireless local area network embedded modules and adapters, mini PCI, and compact flash modules/adapters.

Basix's upcoming wireless modules to be exported also include wireless multi-media adapters, sensors and monitoring and control solutions, Zigbee and Bluetooth modules and adapters.

The Basix-MBV distribution partnership capitalizes on Basix' strength in Bluetooth and hardware design for wireless ODM solutions and design services, and MBV's extensive marketing experience in distributing to middle-tiered OEMs, particularly in the telecommunications, automotive and industrial electronics segments.

For his part, MBV president Dieter Tappenser said: "We foresee high demand coming from European wireless OEMs for wireless ODM platforms that will require more complex level of customization, such as the solutions developed by Basix."

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CHARLIE UMANDAP

DTI forms body to handle pyramiding cases

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry yesterday announced it had formed a special unit that will focus its prosecution on pyramiding cases.

Trade Secretary Cesar V. Purisima said the body would be under the overall supervision of Trade Undersecretary Adrian S. Cristobal Jr., who is in charge of the consumer welfare and trade regulation group.

"With the task force in place, the DTI can now fast-track the review of the complaints against pyramiding and hopefully charge more on illegal marketing schemes," Purisima said.

The trade chief said operators of such schemes were preying on unwary consumers, especially overseas Filipino workers.

The functions of the task force include helping DTI regional offices in evaluating the marketing plans of businesses as well as the complaints against pyramiding, initiating legal or administrative proceedings against those suspected to be engaged in pyramiding, formulating and coordinating education campaigns for the public, and coordinating with other government agencies and law enforcement entities to promote a sustained drive against pyramiding.

For his part, Cristobal said the DTI was stepping up efforts to fight illegal business practices.

"The DTI is going after these companies by establishing strong links with other agencies as well as non-government institutions," he said.

Cristobal said the DTI had signed a memorandum of agreement with the Direct Selling Association of the Philippines (DSAP) to launch a nationwide information drive on the matter.

Cristobal said he had told direct sellers that one way to stem pyramiding scams was to promote self-regulation among industry players.

"While the government is all out in its efforts to prosecute perpetrators of this illegal practice, a large part depends on the industry players themselves," he said. "An effective self-regulation provides for clear and tough guidelines in enforcing certain standards of etiquette among players."

YES, PRESIDENT GLORIA HAS BEEN USING GOVERNMENT FUNDS ...TO HELP THE POOR.

KALSADA NATIN, AALAGAAN NATIN (KANAN): Jobs for the unskilled and unemployed

Mandated under RA 8794 of 1999, the program employed some 300,000 people who were otherwise jobless and unskilled, with total wages paid amounting to more than P1.4 billion, from October 2003 to March 2004.

EXPANDED PHILHEALTH PROGRAM: Free health care for the indigents

About 5 million indigent and poor families, equivalent to about 25 million individuals, were provided with health insurance by President Gloria under the National Health Insurance Program instituted under RA 7875. About P3 billion has been allotted for the program by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) and the Department of Budget and Management. About 65 million Filipinos are now assured of affordable health care services under the program.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE FUND FOR A STRONG REPUBLIC (SAFE4SR): Quick loans for college students

As of April 2004 some 25,000 students were provided assistance under the SAFE4SR program. The program extended loans to graduating college students to P8,000 per semester, payable starting two years after graduation. A total of P500 million has been allocated for the program.

GSIS SUMMER-ONE-MONTH-SALARY (SOS) LOAN PROGRAM: Assistance to ordinary government workers

About 800,000 government employees benefited from the SOS program. A total of P6.5 billion was released as of April 2004 which tremendously helped alleviate the country's civil servants.

PATUBIG SA BARANGAY PROGRAM: Access to clean water for the urban poor

As of April 20, 2004, more than 800,000 urban poor households in Metro Manila and provinces of Rizal, Cavite and Bulacan were provided with clean water using earnings of PAGCOR.

HYBRID RICE PROGRAM: Improving the yields and lives of the impoverished farmers

"Gloria Rice" has provided new jobs for more than 160,000 farm workers, generating additional income of more than P30 million for our poor farmers. The program increased by more than double the harvests of the farmers from 6.6 metric tons to a record of 11.1 tons, dramatically improving their incomes. The program could totally eliminate rice importations. The millions of dollars spent yearly on rice imports could now be used to further modernize our agriculture, thus improving the lives of our millions of poor farmers.

THE OPPOSITION wants to stop these programs. We say:

YES! MRS. PRESIDENT, PLEASE CONTINUE USING GOVERNMENT FUNDS TO HELP THE POOR!

PRO-GLORIA

(Progressive and Responsive Organizations for Good Leadership Outstanding Reforms and Intelligent Actions)

Gov't urged to address power problems

FORMER Energy Secretary Francisco L. Viray urged the government and the private sector to take immediate steps to solve the problems plaguing the power industry today, as competitive power rates and supply shortage.

During the forum, "The Power and Future Challenges in the Power Sector," The Explorers Inc. Viray said there were three options to address these problems. First, government could continue building power plants, however, have seen BOT (build-operate-transfer) contracts with National Power Corp. (Napocor) as the sole buyer, and third, self-liberally implement the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (Epira).

Viray cited the project implementation of the Epira remains the most viable option in solving much of the infrastructure woes. He added that all the other problems associated with the industry today like the 30% (power purchase adjustment) or the Malaya rebated can be solved, while implementing the Epira. In the process, problem cases will also be sorted and the root problems of power shortages and electricity rates will be addressed.

Viray noted that the correct and immediate implementation of the Epira was critical since "energy is a long-term game and could not be fixed overnight. The solutions have to be planned, since the benefits cannot be realized instantly."

"You and I know that it takes time to finance and build a power plant, roughly five years. And you never know what will happen during those years. Putting up a power plant is fraught with risks and delays. Napocor projects always had schedules but there were always unforeseen problems and therefore you can never be too discreet(e) about the schedule," Viray explained.

An ADB study reveals that the Philippines needs an additional capacity of 6,000 megawatts totalling a cost of $7.41 billion over the next 10 years to meet another power crisis. Several sectors have questioned if government can undertake this on its own, or without additional outside investments, especially [illegible] has accumulated debts of almost $30 billion and loans worth P100 billion.

Consumers seek access to electric meter deposits

By Abigail L. Ho

CONSUMER group National Association of Electricity Consumers for Reforms (Nasecore) urged the Energy Regulatory Commission to order Lopez-led Manila Electric Co. to place investments more than P12 billion in meter and bill deposits that the firm had collected over the years.

In a motion filed with the ERC, Nasecore said that placing the meter and bill deposits in a separate account would ensure that the customers would be able to access the fund when they want to do so.

"Our request is based primarily on the consideration that meter and bill deposits should be readily available to Meralco customers in case a time they may want to withdraw the deposit plus the accrued interest thereon from the date of its payment," Nasecore president Nes Bagan said in a statement yesterday.

He added that the current account would also give Meralco consumers access and the assurance that they would have no trouble to get back the deposits that the Lopez-led firm collected.

As Meralco was using part of the meter and bill deposits that it was collecting from its consumers to help fund its daily operations, he said there was a chance that the money might no longer be able to go back to the hands of the consumers.

"We are afraid that Meralco may not be able to refund the customers' meter and bill deposits with its accrued interest, especially if there will be a mass request for refund," he said.

"Meralco officials admitted during the hearing for the instant application that part of these deposits were being used for its daily operations and were also invested in high-yielding financial instruments."

Bagan said Meralco could use financial difficulties as a reason to have the refund of these meter and bill deposits done in phases, similar to its first phase, P50 billion refund for overcharges.

RP officials to limit Singapore's tariff incentives package

By Michelle V. Rosca

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance wants to put up some limits to the incentives package the Philippine government is set to grant to Singapore to settle the case involving duties over petrochemical tariffs.

The DOF wants to make sure the incentives, which includes the elimination of tariffs on selected imports from Singapore, will not significantly harm the government's revenue-generating efforts.

The finance department has recommended that the zero tariffs on chosen Singapore products—including lubricating oil and polymers—be applied only for a certain number of years.

The government agency also wants the draft executive order eliminating tariffs on Singaporean products to include a provision that will state the number of years the zero tariffs shall be imposed.

"The implementing agreement should specify a specific date frame for the application of the zero tariffs to make sure it doesn't harm ... our revenues," said a Finance official.

The official said initial estimates indicated that the elimination of tariffs on the selected Singaporean products would result in about P20 million in revenue losses for the government every year.

The Tariff and Related Matters committee earlier approved the draft executive order and has submitted the same to the National Economic and Development Board for final approval.

The draft executive order was drawn up by the Department of Trade and Industry, the agency directly dealing with Singapore to resolve the petrochemicals tariff row.

The dispute between the Philippines and Singapore stemmed from the failure of the former to reduce tariffs on petrochemical products to 5 percent as stipulated under the common effective preferential tariff scheme (CEPT) of the Asean Free Trade Agreement.

The CEPT rule states that tariffs on petrochemical products should be lowered to 5 percent beginning 2003. The Philippines, however, opted to use its petrochemical tariff more low over a 7-to-10-percent to protect the local petrochemical industry.

Singapore then lodged a protest against the Philippines. Singapore demanded compensation, saying it would undermine investment plans, such as raising tariffs on Philippine exports, if the Philippines would not come up with a settlement offer.

The new incentive agreement that the compensation package for Singapore will involve the elimination of tariffs on selected Singaporean products. The products will cover for those that are not locally produced in the Philippines or those that will not jeopardize the interest of local producers to avoid harming local industries.

Building ties with consumers . . .

From page B1

universal patriotic, it encourages and rewards Filipino ownership and determination to area-making to processes, benefits, opportunities, companies, and industries owned and controlled by Filipinos."

Milking milk—children's beverage have flying hold some promise.

"Consumption of milk in the Philippines is very low, averaging 1 liters per capita per annum, which translates into less than two glasses of milk per Filipino each week," said Ando.

"Drinking milk regularly is a great way to obtain calcium and other nutrients which are important for the proper development of a child's body and brain, good bones and a strong immune system," he added.

Kids' love

"The elementary the first category is the most popular part of the festival in terms of numbers, since most of the participants are children and the farmers make an effort and

Noble commissioner to Baguio flew a simple cardboard made of plastic, but water would clip because they were made to move the face (blood shot), which were very cool.

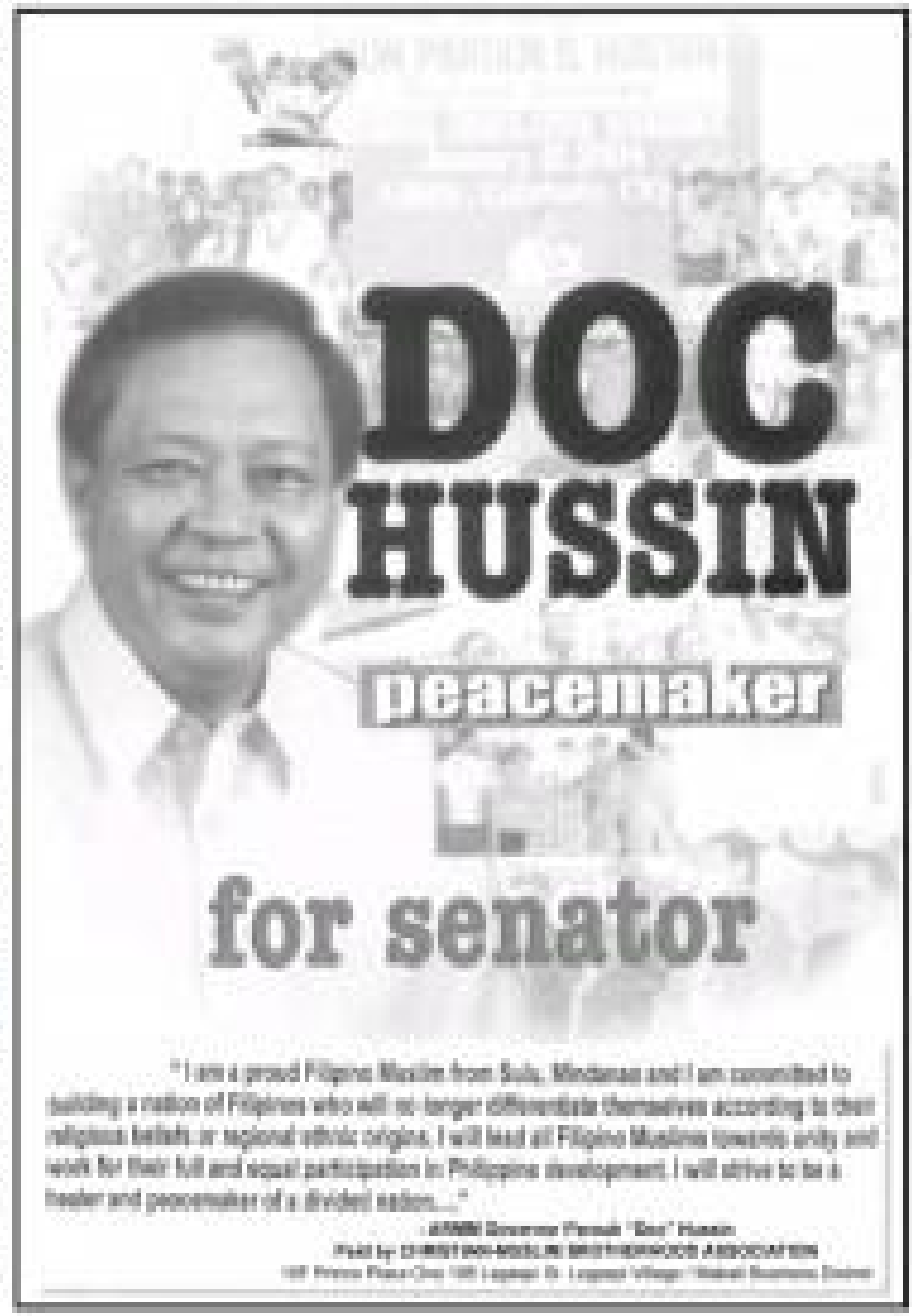
But Tamayo said some fairs in the area category were impressive.

Tamayo singled to some cities in Cagayan de Oro City and Manila, which "kept their stalls to look like typical galleries." Actually, make them look like they are selling in the air."

Other memorable sites were two-hundred dogs who honestly relaxed viewing, Kerry Pet, Kalbo and elephants. The most popular designs were dragonflies, butterflies, crows, horse, owls and dragons.

The BBQF is now held in 10 cities. There are plans to build a cosmos plating the fairs at the fairs in those areas but it would take a lot of money, Ando decided, instead to hold the events in those cities.

Ando said there were also plans by their counterparts in other countries to adopt the [illegible]



Napocor ordered to refund industrial users

By Abigail L. Ho

THE ENERGY Regulatory Commission has ordered National Power Corp. to give back 58 centavos per kilowatt-hour (kWh) to its qualified industrial customers under the government's Special Program to Enhance Electricity Demand (SPEED).

The recently issued directive came as a result of Napocor's failure to "satisfactorily explain" why it did not refund to Iligan the 58-centavos-per-kWh discount that SPEED participants were entitled to.

On Dec. 17, 2002, the ERC ordered a rate discount of 58 centavos per kWh for SPEED participants. However, Napocor only implemented a 56-centavos rate cut for its customers who were covered by the SPEED.

"The 58-centavos difference must be returned to the concerned industrial electricity users. We have ordered Napocor to propose to us a scheme to effect the refund to affected customers," ERC Chair Rodolfo Albano Jr. said in a statement yesterday.

Under the SPEED, industrial and commercial power users consuming at least 1,000 kilowatts (1 megawatt) of electricity per month would be given fixed discounts of 80 centavos per kWh in Luzon, 79 centavos per kWh in the Visayas and 58 centavos per kWh in Mindanao.

The scheme is a joint venture between the Department of Energy and the Department of Trade and Industry.

It was instituted to boost electricity demand and at the same time help distressed industries.

While expected to generate more productivity as incentive to power demand would also subsidize Napocor's overdue capacity.

AEV profit up 13.5%

By Elizabeth L. Sarabia

ASIAVEST Equity Ventures said its net profits climbed 13.5 percent in the first quarter to P440 million.

Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (Ebitda) improved 4 percent to P1.3 billion from the same quarter last year.

The biggest contributors to AEV's profits were its power generation which chipped in a combined total of P259 million in terms of income. This, however, is 20 percent lower than its combined contribution in the first quarter of 2003.

The decrease was due to lower profits from Luzon Hydro Corp. and the two diesel plants in Mindanao—Western Mindanao Power Corp. and Southern Philippines Power Corp.

A special message from KA WALDY

"Vote DOC HUSSIN for Senator"

"DOC HUSSIN is a healer, a gifted physician, a peacemaker, a true patriot, and a visionary leader from Mindanao. Beyond doubt, DOC HUSSIN is one of the most progressive and thoughtful voices of our Filipino Muslim community."

Iboto ang: KAPAYAPAAN

Iboto ang: KAUNLARAN

Iboto ang: PAGKAKAISA

Iboto ang: PAGKAKAPANTAY-PANTAY ng mga MUSLIM at KRISTIYANO

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NOTICE

Ayala Q1 earnings surge 40%

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

AYALA Corp., the country's oldest conglomerate said its net earnings surged 40 percent to P926 million in the first three months from the P656 million last year. The growth was driven by its mobile phone and banking businesses.

AC is in disclosure said the robust financial performances of Globe Telecom and Bank of the Philippine Islands with Ayala's core businesses in property and development unit AC Capital contributed a total of P2.3 billion in equity earnings to the holding company.

The growth was achieved despite higher interest and financing charges that grew 13 percent due to a combination of higher average loan balances and borrowing costs.

"We are pleased with our first quarter performance," said Ayala president Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala II. "The growth momentum in our recurring earnings stream has been sustained as our key businesses continue to deliver very strong financial and operating results. As we look forward to a stable post-election economic environment, we are optimistic that 2004 will be an even better year for Ayala and that we will be able to deliver even more value to our shareholders," Zobel said.

Ayala's key subsidiaries and affiliates also reported positive results.

Its property unit, Ayala Land, Inc. (ALI) reported a 5-percent growth in net income to P636 million, with revenues expanding 19 percent to P5.7 billion. ALI's leasing operations continued to perform favorably as rental revenues grew 9 percent to P687 million on high occupancy rates at Ayala Center and the company's and office buildings, the consolidation of its new mall "destination 4, an effective merchant re-placement program and even more sales growth of 18 percent at Ayala Center. Project take-up was also stronger in the first quarter as land and residential unit sales in ALI's high-end market both increased 34 percent year-on-year.

Building ties with consumers via kite-flying

By Frank Cimatu
PEZA Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—"Summer breeze makes me feel fine/ blowing through the jasmine in my mind/ So much for that 1971 Irish & Gentle song, "Summer Breeze," and the anthem waiting for Summer Fun and the Amorsolan kind.

Summer breeze indeed evoked a time when living was easy and we were flying kites in-stead of answering petitioners.

I remembered that song when I passed by Burnham Park two weeks ago and realized that I could not see the football grounds because of those hundreds of colorful political banners and streamers blocking the view.

Corporate Citizen

Breather

They were all crinkling but years of tearing about them would tell you the difference between a real people and a banka people.

But look up ahead and you see dozens of kites participating in the Bear Brand Kiteflies. There you see that century-old tree, probably planted by Daniel Burnham when he designed the park, still devouring wayward kites. That tree had been devouring kites when I was young.

So there we were, shooting not kites but the breeze to attend another press conference of a politician and decided to just sit on the grass and watch the kites fly.

The Bear Brand Kiteflies (BBKF) has been a summer activity since 1990. During that Lasaria Bear Brand's "Born to Fly," only about 100 people joined.

Edmund Tamayo of InFaith PR remembered being among the handful who travelled that mere pastel flight.

"It was a modest event compared to what it is now. But since 2000, the BBKF has logged close to 25,000 spectators. The biggest number of tourists in a single day was this year's kick-off leg in Davao last February, with a record 7,201 kite entries," said Tamayo.

CHILDREN display their kites during a previous Bear Brand Kite Festival.

Family activity

It was tempting to ask if sales of Bear Brand also soared like a kite during a typhoon.

But Mike Arcilla, brand manager of Bear Brand for Nestle, said the contest was an initiative of Bear Brand to participate itself with a wholesome family activity.

"The impact of the BBKF on the brand is highly positive, but it is more of an effort to build good relationships with consumers rather than strictly a sales-generating activity," Arcilla said.

"For all of us, it promotes values that strengthen families like sharing and togetherness; it provides a fun, colorful and exciting outdoor event that families and children in particular, and people of all ages from all walks of life in general, can enjoy.

"It promotes a time-honored,

BUSINESS 1B

Disclosures

AEB Bio Eng Financial Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 28 at 3 p.m. at the Mandarin's Hotel in Manila. Record date is April 27.

* * *

ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. will hold an investors' and analysts' briefing on May 13 at 3 p.m. at the ELJ Communications Center, Quezon City.

* * *

BANAHAW Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 27 at 2:30 p.m. at PUBC Plaza, Makati. Record date is April 26.

* * *

ELECTEC directors of **Cosmos Bottling Corp.** were Ramon S. Ang, Roberto G. Huang, Hector P. Colmilla, Pastilon M. Fajardo, Gabriel L. Villareal, Ferdinand R. Constantino, Ma. Rosario C. Buenaventura, Manuel H. Jimenez and Alfredo C. Antonio.

* * *

PHILIPPINE Long Distance Telephone Co. said it would back Namfrel this coming May 10 national elections by extending the largest and most extensive corporate support with its telecommunications facilities and services.

* * *

PICOP Resources Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on June 29, with May 28 as record date. Also, the board accepted the resignation of Aurelio T. Figueroa as chief financial officer and compliance officer.

Compiled by Erika Hernandez, PDS Research

Forex reserves . . .

Turn to page 8B

months of April amounted to $56 million, better than the $663-million from a year ago.

There was likewise some improvement in inflows from overseas Filipinos workers abroad of remittances for payment requirements for the incoming school year.

The April inflows from loans, investments and investments, however, were partly offset by disbursements to service the debt requirements of both the national government and the NGP.

The BSP's net international reserves, on the other hand, stood at $34 billion as of end-April, inclusive of revaluation of reserve assets and reserve-related liabilities. The level was 5.2 percent or $428.1 million higher than the end-March level.

As of the first three months of the year, however, the country's BOP still incurred a deficit of $197.6 million owing to large short falls in the first two months

Manila Bulletin Publishing Corporation

WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON

May 5, 2004

Her Excellency Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo
Malacañang Palace Compound
New Executive Building
J.P. Laurel Street
San Miguel, Manila

Dear Gloria:

Since my upcoming book tour will prevent me from making a swing through Manila during your campaign, I wanted to drop you a note to send along support in another form.

It's been an honor to call you my friend since we met at Georgetown, and I've been proud of your successes over the years as a skilled economist, legislator, trade official, and now President. The world has clearly taken notice of your leadership. In your short time in office, you've overcome many critical challenges and seem to be making significant progress on many fronts.

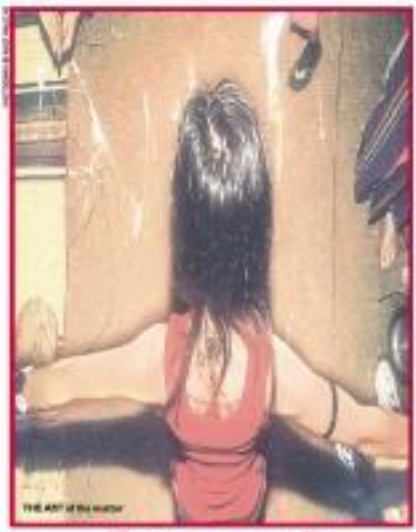
I know that you have focused much of your energy on the economy of the Philippines. I agree with that, and your "Pro Poor" agenda is right on target.

I'm sorry I won't get to see you over the summer, but I wish you good luck in the campaign and in your work for all the citizens of the Philippines. I hope to see you before long.

Sincerely,

Bill

SATURDAY Super



There is one thing shared by Nick Joaquin's generation and ours, and it ain't just San Miguel Beer

Art, soul and the Motherland

Tats Diaz

FOR when the beer rolls, it rolled for the last time on May Day Eve for the man considered the greatest Filipino writer, Nick Joaquin. Of course, when a great writer departs this world, his words are heard even louder.

As I was reading the report about his final, apocalyptic few days, I was struck by what he said amidst the near generation of non-dentists. "I feel too old and they are so young!" Those simple words spoke volumes to me about the many seasons that exist between the generations; it told of the schism between the old vanguards and the avant-gards.

Certainly the differences between the two worlds are glaring. Myth has given way to MTV. The dusty cullet of old are now hidden in the shadows of skyscrapers, post-war culture has shifted in a pre-paid subculture, and long term memory is now replaced by Short Messaging Service. Yet there is one thing shared by Nick Joaquin's generation and ours, and it ain't just San Miguel Beer. The semiliteral said this connects our epoch is a sense of country. Indeed, young and old, in life and in death, we all know—we should know—the same Mother.

Portrait of the Artist as a Riddler

The death of a National Artist always resurrects in me certain lingering questions: What does it really mean to be an artist? Particularly, what role does the artist play in creating the big portrait of a nation?

Woody Allen, playing the role of comedian Alvy Singer in the Oscar winning film, "Annie Hall" commented, "you know you're always trying to get things perfect on an because it's real difficult in life." The struggle here, more than the struggle for perfection in the creative process, is the subversive nature of art. I, personally, define art as a riddle. A true artist, in that sense, is a talented riddler. Why? Because it/he/she does not impart meaning by stating the obvious. Instead, it hints at the manner of the message. Faced with creative work, we are wont to ask, "What is it about?" Or, "What does this say to me?" A good film can impart an unsolvable message without ever saying it in the script, an arresting photograph can evoke compassion, a painting can convey melancholy with an interplay of colors and strokes, music can express the dimensions of love in a different language. And looking back on our own history—a book or two can ignite a sense of national pride, when people are able to read the invisible sentences between the lines.

Thus, I have never believed that art is frivolous. For that would be like saying that love or pride or passion is insignificant. The sensitive energy behind true art is a powerful force that can transcend change, even spark revolutions, be they serious transformations or critical progressions. The revolution occurs at the inspired moment, when a deeper sensibility within a awakened and hidden meanings are discerned. It's almost like saying, "Aha!" when you solve a riddle.

And yet today we are being drowned in the mangled morass of "artist," "talent" and even "artistic" to a very different sense, such that we have incomprehensible but harsh as "Artists of the Month" on music video channels, "talents" that entertainers have anything but, and National Artistes gracing the highest offices in the land. Most of these people aren't riddlers, they are jokers.

I believe that now, more than ever, we need to be in tune with the creative force that speaks of

SEE PAGE 11

Single, white females (and males)

WHITE IN RED. Birthday celebrants Cindy Karlota and Borgy Manotoc

AMUSED MUSES. Nicolette Bell (Peggy birthday bash—Rina's today!) and Raya Manotoc

By Tim Yap

I WENT through my phone book looking for singles and realized there were not too many.

So when I called to invite people to the infamous "Singles" party at Bangit in Makati's Red, I reached only 21 people.

Fortunately, they happened to be 21 of the city's most eligible. "Most eligible how?" the code of conduct usually includes people who are extremely dating, making the ones listed prime to poaching.

I made sure that they were truly "available."

"Are you single? As in, totally not committed to anyone? Not dating anyone? Not waiting for an answer? If the answer to all these questions is yes—then you are invited!"

The first bar was super packed for the Friendster flirting of Miss Jo's many real, dubious admirers. Decked in summer's most practical color—white (nope, not real). With so much white inside Red's walls, the people looked like teeth in a healthy mouth.

Speaking of mouths, we had a mouthful of mouth-watering treats—from canapes to Red's 21 cocktails—to celebrate the 21st birthday of Bangit's resident bartender/hostess Jo Gonzalez. Cindy Karlota, another birthday celebrant, joined the party at midnight, when they blew the candles on their respective cakes.

Vodka-tini, lychee-tini, choco-tini and "Celsius" were flowed like the Rio.

Designer Mikhel Apel, Borgy and Cindy Manotoc-Ong goodies while insanely single Joel Ong was a gift certificate (for two!) as everyone teased singlehood. I overheard Hans Montenegro sincerely single as well, talking to model Alex Eala. "I think that's why we like being single—because we are so total control of ourselves and we have so much more choice."

I don't know about you, Alex, but I only had the 21 you have to choose from.

HOTSHOT BLONDS. Ali Ll of Rhoda

MY TWO FAVORITE PEOPLE. Alex Eala with Rachel Anne Borgy Manotoc

RED MANILA LASS. Yasmine Hidalgo with Dyan Matchinaud and Chris Gaza

SINGLE forever, made Joel Ong

WANNA HAVEA BIKINITINI? Brand

LET THEM EAT CAKE. Models Ari, Chi—more a treat

ADDICTED TO GROUP FUN. Corinda Lloyd, Tim Yap, Anna Angara and Borgy

LIKE flat singles

ALONE BUT INSTAGONEY. "Cheers to singlehood"

ART TO HURT. (L-R, Miguel Morales, Nicolette Bell and Ilya Quiazon

Super! selections

VOTE for your mother!

"Slowing energy me??" Tell me who your mom is ... And Super! will tell you where to take her tomorrow, "Mare's day."

RELAX, refresh and rejuvenate with mom at The Spa

Spa break!

Bring mom with a day at the spa as she rejuvenates herself with tranquility and rejuvenation. After getting stressed out (along soon) with The Spa's rejuvenating treatments. For special packages, call: Acropolis, 634-3446; Alabang, 850-5408; Bel-Air, 895-5850; Greenbelt, 840-1326.

And if mom is one of 'em badminton aficionados, take her to The Spa Acropolis Badminton, with Olympic standard floors using high-tech wood suspended systems (you wouldn't want anything less for mommy's hips, knees and ankles). After the game, she can relax, refresh and rejuvenate in the sauna room, sauna, hot-and-cold whirlpools, and vanity lounges ...and forget where dad is.

BADMINTON Angel at the newly opened The Spa Acropolis Badminton court

Take her to Italy!

Il Postutello means "little bridge" in Italian. This restaurant has earned a reputation for offering nothing less than authentic Italian food. Almost six years in the business, it has lived up to its name as bridge to different regions in Italy.

Every three months, Il Postutello features the specialty dishes of a different region.

Portuguese guest chef Nuno Mendes, who has made a mark in the global restaurant community by working in some of the most prestigious restaurants around the United States (Jean Georges in New York, The Bazaar Pacific SV and The Pastis in California) and Europe (Restaurant El Bulli in Rosas, Spain), recently revealed his innovative creations.

Let's just say Chef Mendes is someone you'd "love to bring home to mom."

He has left Manila (for Il Postutello Ayala) ended (super-duper) but his special creations remain on the menu.

For reservations, call Mode at Alberto, 887-7308 or 887-4999. Il Postutello is on the second floor of Ayala Bldg. 123 Valero Street, Salcedo Village, Makati City.

Simply Soufflé!

While on a Super! surprise: tell mom you personally picked a special menu for her (even if it's not true, your mom will love you for taking her to Le Soufflé Drigue, which has prepared a little special something for mama today—a new menu, gifts, and more!

But let this be your secret—call for reservations, 636-3633, 636-1114, 634-8995 or 634-8971 and they'll take care of the most important woman in your life (at least for tomorrow).

Art, soul . . .

Pasuyan C3

change. We need to define (or redefine) what it means to be nationalistic in this modern era without making it so loudly chic it becomes flashy. We need those revolutions to revolutions, that breath of inspiration to constantly connect us about our unique identity in the global scheme of things. We need those encrypted messages to keep us from being stymied and turn hopeless about the one true place we call home.

Enter-and-Download

I am part of that Entre and Download! generation that has to sift through the frenetic imagery and swim through the sensory influx before we can even begin to reflect on the deeper meanings behind it all. To be candid, it really sucks to keep hearing that I'm in an age group that's guilty of having the memory capacity of a goldfish. But in defense of this motley crew that I am a living fraction of, I would also be in a good position to say that there is a throbbing pulse of faith kept alive by the young artists who keep that revolutionary spirit alive. The popular mediums may have changed, but the skills are still there for us to solve. Whether it's in mastering the syllables of Bamboo's song, "Noypi," or looking at the 3D-generated Ambay ladies and the Mayon volcano in the 5th audio of "Finding Venus," courtesy of the Filipino animators over at Pixel, or reflecting on the face of Bonifacio emblazoned on the 1-piso of the underground label Bamboo—hark, even just observing the rising sun or the blue-and-red colors on the current MTV logo shown on our TV screens—we have to seek reminders of the heritage that shapes our characters. The riddles are around us, and we can solve them only by asking what they really mean to us.

Never fail to seek it out, and never forget.

(Buck Ho rose, send me a note at buck_rose@yahoo.com)

TEQUILANCHA THOUSAND SHOPS. Aubrey Miles and Troy Montero

ELEGANT BLONDE. Celine Lopez as Beyoncé's Paterna

CLASSIC WITH A TWIST. Jake Vargas, Pinga Ledesma glam

JUST SHOP. Agnes Locsin and her Bonbon Bazaar staff on the red carpet

BOOB TUBE. Jessica Cox Dillon and Miriam Quiambao

SUPER STYLE. Audrey Carpio wraps Manila Pablo on a morning up

MELO-LICIOUS. Dru Vicki Belo promotes lipo service

Everybody comes to Belowood

EXTRA CHALLENGING. Pixie Bernardo, one of Vicki's satisfied clients

FAMILY FIRST. Lisa and Albert Martinez

PERFECT PITCH. Aurelio and Jojo

NO NEED FOR MAKEOVERS. Kinoy Sales and Carmen Briggs

BIG BEAUTIES. Miriam, Tim, Vicki and Celine at Bonbon's

VANITY affair to launch Belo on Nature's

By Tim Yap
Photos by Bonbon Tan Mangile

SO others afraid of Vicki Belo? There they looking better than any of us [illegible]...Dr Belo's new home.

Okay, so the new Belo clinic isn't exactly a cosmetic surgery center where you can go to have your nose, cheeks, butt cheeks, thighs, tummy, or whatever else part of your body, modified. But, thanks to Belo clinic acts as a dermatological chapel for those seeking the forgiveness of skin.

It's not as if you can go to Bonbon's and pretend to buy some bagoong and then trip over to the 58th level and come down looking like Wanda Williams—although seamlessly at the brand's dinner-ated.

Tonna Patricia Addison played Rhodin Kruge runaway as she hosted the night's Hollywood-themed affair. Cristian Lopez came as Eminem's wig courtesy of Bonbon), complete with red carpet from here to the 58th floor—with local royal tenants there in attendance.

Phoenicia Bautista admitted having been "most [unright]" swayed, and so did Anthony Miles and Miriam Quiambao. Gio Tribiet was tapped "bonus queen," with Maurice Arcache as her king. Abrigado meant star proud of her lips, and Albert Martinez and Troy Montero boasted sprayed-on tans.

The one hope spare about these nose jobs, tummy tucks and breast implants—making you enjoy the food by Alangaries Peters and the giveaways from Bvlgari, Lourdes Delgado Perfumes, and Clarins...all Vicki's favorites. Others trooped to the bar when the memory of tooth-ation, hoping to evade Bonbon's query on what Vicki had done for them.

And then...four songs sung-ed (kanta'ioke Mod-el Alex Montes, capitalizing on his Latin heritage, took the floor and charmed the ladies. Super's Manny Valera and Miguel Bombo had a guessing game going: What songs were most appropriate for the event? "Can Like a Bride," and "You've got the Best of my Vida" were the winning duties.

Bonbon's after party continues: Jewel Tyquiengco won the night's most glam prize—P50,000 worth of services by Belo...for which she got dagger stares from everyone else who wanted [and needed] them.

The vivacious one thanked everyone for their support and promises with a special mention for partner, Joey Ramos.

All in all, it was a lavish affair, as "Belo the belle" as can be.

HOLLIN ROGUE. Tonia Prince-Valera' son as cabinet underdoer

JOYCE TIOZO. Jason Jimenez, Bvlgari's queen

MY BAGAY. Friend Ara Mina

POSH AND BECK AND CALL. Victoria Loudes and Joel Tanzon

WHERE'S CHONG? Arjan, Vicki and Crystalle

MY LIFE IS SEALED. Maxine Arriesta-Ramos, married to Sealy Inc. Exec Erwin and Liezel Ramos

THE KING AND US. Ube Medina in war with Ronald Reza

JUST SHOOT ME. Francis dela Torre with Joel Torre

AMERICAN ME. With Jurgen Sampson, who plays the male lead

Ube goes to Hollywood

By Tats Ortiz

LET'S take some time off and reflect on the ube...shall we? It's a purple root, and it's indigenous to the Philippine Islands. It's the "special" that makes the Halo-Halo special, and it is the number one flavor in our homeland, when in most other countries, it's either chocolate or vanilla. And it could just be the thing that will make it to Hollywood.

Based in Manila and Los Angeles, Ube Media is a creative and investment conglomerate solely that produces films that will introduce Manila to Hollywood with a fresh, romantic project in the works. Shedding light on the major players in Ube's runway, two year old entertainment media manager Sheila Lim. This petite and lively ebony represents the new breed of neo-global nationalists, inspired by a positive outlook that Filipino filmmaking can achieve commercial success even in the world's most competitive and demanding film arena. Their solution is to be handled with care—it's a film currently entitled "Freedom."

"Freedom" is a story of an American journalist who becomes entangled in the political and emotional intrigues set into motion by a mysterious Filipina socialite (played fittingly enough by Kristine Preza). The film's story will be told within the framework of the film noir tradition, with morally ambiguous characters and an emotionally resonant. The crew is currently wrapped up shooting a 5- to 7-minute trailer set to the familiar landscapes and hideouts of Manila, including Spain Avenue, the Corazon Palace and a frenetic gallivant at noon. Sheila eventually plans to shop around "Freedom" sneak peak among prospective investors in Los Angeles, in the hope of landing production deals to direct a movie with a film actors here in the country. We unlike previous film greats that have shot Manila, disguised as another Southeast Asian city like Bangkok, the film will showcase Manila as herself—call it a "exotic in Manila" if you will.

IT'S ALL SCRIPTED. From actress to producer to one global nationalist

An ambitious endeavor indeed, yet Sheila is not one to settle for anything less than best. Her first sentences in the limelight were not behind the camera nor but in front and center of the theatre stage, during is her thief passion, and she in fact used to perform to Stanislavsky plays as a teenager. She eventually moved to New York where she took a more pragmatic route, double majoring in International Business and Marketing at NYU. Proving that though you can take a girl out of the stage, you can't take the stage out of the girl she focused her studies on the business of show business. She then moved to Los Angeles, where she hooked up with family friend and talented cinematographer Francis de la Torre, a film school graduate of USC and who has shot several music videos and independent short films shown on Cartoon and HBO. Their fellowship, together with Sheila's savvy Drama, took root and formed Ube Media. The chronicle then came up with the big idea of producing a film and shooting it in Manila, a landscape that is virtually unfamiliar to foreign audiences.

"The perception abroad is that the Philippines is a crazy chaotic, unromantic,inhabited country. There's not a lot of confidence among investors to spend money here, with no guarantee of the quality of the product," she relates. "First and foremost, we want to bring international production to the country in any shape or form. No one really knows what goes on here. We want something to be out there that represents us today," Sheila offers, hinting a thing or two from the successes of La Buena Onda, or the New Wave of acclaimed Latin American filmmakers who have hit commercial success with independently produced films such as Mexico's "Amores Perros" and "Y Tu Mama Tambien" and Brazil's "City of God." Ube Media hopes to offer something that will reveal contemporary Filipino society in Modern day Manila. "I think the reason why those foreign films make it in the commercial market is because they deal with universal themes," she believes, and that they are embarking on weaving genre films with concepts that even foreigners can identify and relate to.

Sheila and Francis came back to Manila to check out the quality of filmmaking equipment here, and discovered that the tools were more than competent. The reason behind the sub-standard output of many films in the local industry, Sheila believes, is that many producers and directors are not up on certain details in the filmmaking process, details which eventually spell a huge difference in the final product. Filmmaking quality is the foremost component that Ube Media hopes to revolutionize. The Ube gang eventually secured some initial financing to produce the trailer of "Freedom," starring a talent pool of acclaimed Filipino actors such as Joel Torre, Bembol Roco, Jaggy Alonzo and Jaime Pedregosa.

OUT TO CHANGE THE WORLD. Sheila Lim eyes away

"I want people to change their minds when it comes to making films in the Philippines. I think filmmakers should have a more global vision," Sheila relates. Acknowledging that she could be incurring the ire of a lot of the local film industry bigwigs, she points out that there remains a lot to be desired with the filmmaking process in the local scene. Aside from budget limitations, which is usually the biggest concern in any film venture, local filmmaking eschews certain fundamental principles of the art. Scriptwriting for one, requires a lot of time, something inexperienced filmmakers are intrigued in the film discipline. To remedy this, the crew applies the necessary skills they learned as formal film school.

Groundbreaking as Ube may be, their project is in no way a case of artistic schizophrenia. "We want to be artistic, but hey—we also want to sell. Several Filipino films have gained acclaim abroad but mostly in the experimental, arthouse genre films that don't even dare line to the commercial market. Our strategy is to make genre films that will appeal to the foreign market."

A spirit of idealism behind the project aims to change the general perception that pervades many young people's perception about the Philippines today. Sheila points out that 10 years in particular find a sense of alienation in a culturally confused society. "I want young people to stop bitching about the Philippines, or pretending to be someone else, someone we're not. We hope to bring back a true sense of pride. Yes, we've adopted culture, we're a mix of everything—that's the Filipino today!" Like the halo-halo indeed, and from the halo of it, Ube could be the ingredient that will make it special.

ROAMING AND MOON. Jurgen Sampson and Rosanna Prieto

ACTORS INVASE. Sheila Lim with Joel Torre

GOLF WITH BALLS. Boet Soussa, Paul Moreno, John Kerkorian and Lucio Tan Jr.

SUPERMODEL Paulo Nunes

Liam Chi Sung has the longest ... drive

JOHNNY Limos in his winning form

MICHAEL Campbell of NZ gets cordial

CHINESE Derek Wong and Hong Kong actress star Michael Wong

Sybil Sussan and Maria Nunes

Singa - FORE!

By Martin Vidda

SOME of us may never be as good as Tiger Woods or Jennifer Rhodes. But that shouldn't stop us from trying. I reached down to swallowing Singapore last week to try my duration.

The biggest international celebrity golf event in the region, the annual Caltex Cup Celebrity Challenge kicked off on March 13 at the prestigious Laguna National Golf & Country Club in Singapore in aid of several charities including the Dr. AB Manzano Foundation. Over 40 personalities from eight countries were flown in by organizers Arthaus (the first part of all their acronyms, in my opinion) to participate in the two-day, invitation-only competition. Actors, politicians, media personalities, models, powerful businessmen, junior golfers and professional golfers were all on the roster to tee-off. Last year, ex-President Fidel Ramos represented the Philippines, but was quite sore why I was invited.

On the last note here, for an event as the prestigious Pacific Heights of golfers all the participants were generally accommodated, my driver eagerly inquired if I was an actor from Manila. I said I was a writer. He stopped talking to me. I took this opportunity to observe the geometrical aesthetic in and surrounding cleanliness of the city state.

The tournament is patronized after the Ryder Cup... most athletes love playing in such many personal with golf pros and businessmen. For those not familiar with the format, it basically means you get to screw up at the expense of your partners. My lucky golf buddy was none other than Manila's most above-average Johnny Limos. He took one look at me and I could tell he was convinced why the ball PR couldn't make it.

The Caltex VIP hospitality was overlooking the 14th green of the country estate was shown with personalities like, great John Kerkorian of the Riviera Cellos, Manufacturer Datuk's Lee Sharpe (Hollywood Hong Kong actress/star Michael Wong, Smith, All-star Rugby ball of Taiwan and formally, Singapore television actor James Lye, World Badminton Champion star Rudi Hartono & that famous, fashion models Hana Beauty, Cree Cha & Michelle Tanner. There was also a group out here of Tiger Woo models, Ilene, Isabel and Isalle — what more could a golfer want? Oh yeah, a caddy.

Speaking of which, although we didn't win the tournament, Johnny Caltex did provide one of the weekend's most entertaining moments by winning the Closest-to-the-Pin chipping contest. The rules were incredible — he downed two beers, got the closest shot-up, and proceeded to beat a field of mostly 40-somethings by placing a 50-yard chip shot over an we about a foot from the hole.

I didn't get to see his first award-winning performance but I heard it was a blast. Rumor is the Raffles Hotel was thronged after Ramos-Nuñez the party had celebrities trying their luck at hammer throw and archery, while Tiger Woo and high-energy music lured the remaining Americans pre-mealtime. Justin Simpson of ABN led the fund-raising activities, together with Philip Lindeman. Some of the sports celebrities contributed by providing coaching clinics at the Singapore American School — a nice close-up of the field activities.

This is an event truly worthy of attention. It's great fun with great people, and it's all for a noble cause. Some of us may never be as good as Tiger, or Jennifer, or even Johnny for that matter, but that doesn't mean we should stop trying. I'm looking forward to being invited for a celebrity again next year.

GOLF for a good cause

The Caltex Cup Celebrity Challenge 2004

MISS for a great cause

SATURDA Super

Invasion of the B-Listers

Ape against the machine

Gino de la Paz

Underdogs and oddballs, like the temporarily amusing William Hung, rule Hollyweird, and it's pointless to resist

CHINESE immigrants and their descendants in North America have banded rockets for centuries. Me thanks to "American Idol" rejects William Hung, their crusade has been pushed back by a few decades. His spastic, karaoke-death march rendition of Ricky Martin's "She Bangs" resurrects the buck-toothed, fresh-off-the-boat stereotype they've been trying so hard to kick out of bed. But coincidentally, Hung sure has a recording contract, a manic video, and the rapt attention of countless bloggers who think he's charming in a Special Olympics kind of way. Meet William Hung, "Face of the Apocalypse."

If someone had told me a year ago that a high-strung thespian would create ripples in the American entertainment industry, I would've chalked it up to sheer dementia. In fact, I probably would've slapped any knee-bender in sight, laughed myself into a coma. Admittedly, William Hung is an endearing as well as an oddball in the Hollywood universe inhabited by Simon, Gwyneth and Colin. However, in a parallel planet where "Big-ready" is considered quality programming—also known as Hollywood—Hung is not a geeky outcast but a coveted one. Exactly what kind of celebrity is he? That's open to debate.

The temporarily amusing Hung—along with anyone who's ever appeared in any reality TV show—is part of popculture's so-called B-list. An umbrella to unreasonable A-Listers, B-Listers achieve success-to another not by their ability to superbly wear a movie role, design an architectural masterpiece, or do anything remotely ingenious. There are—and rare target luxuries because famous entertainment and nothing more.

From the get-go, reality television is the petri dish in which this specimen breeds. Realizing that Jellemie Bloom would never agree to be "The Bachelorette," producers have shuffled down the food ladder to find the formerly obscure rats turned celebrities. Because of this meth-

fond of fruit?

Have a fruit cocktail. Drysdale

DUKE AND DUMPLING. Paris Hilton and Nicole Richie

TILL SMART DO US BE. Nick and Jessica after reading their first book without pictures

WHO DIS?. Someone please find William Hung-up!

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searching the scheming pimps and hoes of "Pot Luvz ur Money 2" holds rewards the end of their robes. If unknown? Stars raped into compliance, our wholesome TV-watching past will never be the same again.

Look at it this way: If "Survivor: Africa" champ Ethan Zohn can splat ball event anchorwatch for anemic on-relay, would it sell as much as Jessica Simpson's? Hell no. Serviceably clever PR can't stop fame's meandering down from hitting Zohn's home today guest today set on his way out. With talent as a mere afterthought, how then do we believe B-Listers stack up against the high citizens of Hollywood? Just, do they even stack up at all?

Till smart do us be

Set up, search, but don't you dare think Jessica Simpson is Bobbi, some of Hollywood's top dramas are falling to the bottom rung as well. These celebrities may not classify a basket of blackberries—having spoken to—for our viewing pleasure, but the shock value of their stupidity is eclipse-sized.

Ex-98 Degrees' Nick Lachey admits their runaway hit show on MTV, "Newlyweds: Nick and Jessica," was created to cement their status as parents. In this point, however, he says that they're more known as TV stars than as recording artists. Well, at least he is. While Jessica's singing career is on the up saving perhaps to having Tony Oz to sing. (She once quoted if time was a "chicken or Bob," and if Bobbi swings seven times, they are Bobbi. Thank God she's not.) Another blonde-tressed human sensation is sidelined between Paris Hilton. Previously known only for being really rich and cooking someone's sausage, Paris joins Lionel Richie's daughter Blondie in "The Simple Life," an odd-couple girls going wild in Middle America. (Paris through that Wal-Mart was a place where they sold walls. Help.) Despite having IQs that together, can probably be measured on a thermometer, Jessica and Paris find audiences at first. "Dude!" How did that happen? Is it in the water or what?

Given their wealth and/or talent, celebrities like Nick, Jessica, Paris and the Osbournes are the last people you'd think need of the extra exposure. But here they are, being shot live in a presidential fish bowl just like everyone in A World They prove that sometimes, the distance from point A to point B is one TV series away.

Equal opportunity stardom

It's devastatingly simple to despise the cast of the reality-based genre, but you've got to admit that those flashes of the pan make up for their lack of talent with plenty of balls. Form the seemingly artistic associates of "American Idol" are Austral Inch-cuffed to Ote B-army boomers, they are publicity and executable arming for any approval. Stories reeking swing with determination, but anybody sane has become a sane by not giving head to everyone's vagus. That's in B.

A couple of local networks have taken to creating their own brand of loser by playing on the format of "American Idol," which by the way is a rebrand of the BBC's "Pop Stars." Like school paparazzi with bigger budgets, GMA's "Starstruck" and ABS-CBN's "Star Circle Quest" are taking in the sun because of a simple formula: Form talent search parties, and you are default B-Listers, they do everything in their finite power to entertain the public. By singing, jumping through hoops, and exhibiting humiliation, the hapless wannabes quail their target market by accommodating their voyeuristic needs. In the process, they give a face to the demographic Pinoy Aware, barely, the music are empowered by the mid-friendliness of the single-serving stars they create for their own consumption. With no one guarding the border to outdoors—the local judges are only half-bricks, for one—there is no reason to be getting who too-accessible. Where's the thrill, not to mention the quality in that?

As a pessimist, my instincts are screaming that this whole B-List invasion is a load of crap. But likewise, my gut is telling me that reality-TV is futile. Everything moves within a control, and these B-Listers are just ambitious outsiders who would have been obscure in a less chemical time. So, if it's indeed true that everyone's a star in his or her own right, we must be in a point where the B-will overtake the A's. After all, aren't B-Listers just slightly less inhibited versions of us?

(How well do you know your ABCs? Hit us up at worldwidesplash@yahoo.ca.)

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